# LADY GRACE

MRS HENRY WOOD

M Boon

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THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

# LADY GRACE

## A NOVEL

BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD

AUTHOR OF

"EAST LYNNE," "THE CHANNINGS," "JOHNNY LUDLOW," ETC.

*THIRTY-SIXTH THOUSAND*

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1908

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
DUKE STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E., AND GREAT WINDMILL STREET, W.

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CHAPTER

# LADY GRACE.

## CHAPTER I.

### GREAT AND LITTLE WHITTON.

A RUSTIC congregation was pouring out of a rustic church one Sunday afternoon—St. Mary's, in the hamlet of Little Whitton, situated about thirty miles from the metropolis. Great Whitton, some three miles off, was altogether a different affair, for the parish there was more aristocratic than rustic, and the living was worth nine hundred a-year: Little Whitton brought its incumbent in only two hundred, all told. The living of Great Whitton was in the gift of the Earl of Avon, whose seat was on the other side of it. The incumbent of Great Whitton was an old man, almost past duty; the incumbent of Little Whitton was an able and attractive man scarcely thirty, the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten. Therefore, little wonder need be expressed if some of the Great Whitton families ignored their old Rector, who had lost his

teeth, and could not by any effort be heard, and came to listen to the eloquent Mr. Baumgarten.

A small open carriage, the horses driven by a boy, jockey fashion, waited at the church-door. The boy was in a crimson jacket and a velvet cap, the postillion livery of the Avons. The carriage was without doors; the sweeping seat behind was low and convenient; therefore, when two ladies emerged from the church they stepped into it unassisted. The one looked about fifty years of age, and walked slowly; the other was a young lady of exceeding fairness, with somewhat haughty features and haughty eyes, blue as the summer sky. The boy touched his horses and drove on.

"He surpassed himself to-day, Grace," began the elder lady.

"I think he did, mamma."

"But it is a long way to come—for me. I can't venture out in all weathers. If we had him at Great Whitton, now, I could hear him every Sunday."

"Well, mamma, nothing is more easy than to have him there—as I have said more than once," observed the younger, bending down to adjust something in the carriage, that her sudden heightening of colour might pass unnoticed. "It is impossible that Mr. Chester should last long, and you could get Henry to give him the living."

"Grace, you talk as a child. Good livings are not

given away so easily ; neither are men without connections inducted to them. I never heard that young Baumgarten had any connections ; not as much as a father or mother, even ; he does not speak of his family. No ; the most sensible plan would be for Mr. Chester to turn off that muff of a curate, and take on Baumgarten in his stead."

The young lady threw back her head. "Rectors don't give up their preferments to subside into curates, mamma."

"Unless it is made well worth their while," returned the elder, in a matter-of-fact tone ; "and old Chester might make it worth Mr. Baumgarten's."

"Mr. Chester ought to retire. For my part, I cannot imagine how these old clergymen can persist in remaining in their livings."

"The clergy must grow old as well as other people, my dear."

"I am not speaking of age so much as of failing faculties. Some men older than Mr. Chester are as capable of fulfilling their duties as ever they were. But Mr. Chester is not."

The young lady received no answer to this, and they went along in silence.

"Mamma!" she exclaimed, when they were about a mile on the road, "we never called to inquire after Mrs. Dane."

"I did not think of doing so."

"*I* did. I shall go back again. James!"

The boy, without slackening his speed, half turned on his horse. "My lady?"

"When you come to the corner, drive down the lane and go back to the cottage."

He touched his cap and looked forward again, and Lady Grace sank back in the carriage.

"You might have consulted me first, Grace," grumbled the Countess of Avon. "And why do you choose the longer way round by the lane?"

"The lane is shady, mamma, and the afternoon sunny; to prolong our drive will do you good."

Lady Grace laughed as she spoke, and it would have taken one more penetrating than the Lady Avon had ever been to divine that all had been done of set purpose: that when her daughter drove from the church-door, she had fully intended to proceed part of the way home, and then go back again. Lady Grace Carmel had rather a strong will, which had been fostered by indulgence, for she was an only daughter.

We must notice another of the congregation, one who had left the church by a different door. It was a young lady of two or three and twenty; she had less beauty than Lady Grace, but a far sweeter countenance. She crossed the churchyard, and opening one

of its gates, found herself in a narrow sheltered walk, running through a corner of Whitton Wood. It was the nearest way to her home, Whitton Cottage.

A few paces within it, she stood against a tree, turned and waited; her lips parted, her cheek flushed, and her hand was laid upon her beating heart. Was she expecting any one to join her? Little doubt of it; and that it was one all too dear to her these signs betrayed. The ear of love is strangely fine, and Edith Dane bent her ears to listen: with the first sound of approaching footsteps she walked hurriedly on. Would she be caught waiting for him? No, no; rather would she hide herself for ever than betray aught of the deep love that lay in her heart for the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten.

It was Mr. Baumgarten who was following her. He sometimes chose the nearer way home, too: a tall, graceful man, with pale, classic features, and luminous brown eyes set deeply; but in his face might be seen somewhat of irresolution. He strode on, and overtook Miss Dane.

"How fast you are walking, Edith!"

She turned her head with the prettiest air of surprise possible, her cheeks bright with love's rosy flush. "Oh—is it you, Mr. Baumgarten? I was walking fast to get home to poor mamma."

Nevertheless, it did happen that their pace slackened

considerably; in fact, they scarcely advanced at all, but sauntered along side by side, as if to enjoy the beauty of the summer afternoon.

"They have been taking me to task to-day," suddenly began Mr. Baumgarten.

"Who? The Avons, do you mean? I saw they were at church."

"Not the Avons. What have they to do with me, Edith?" And Edith blushed at his question; or rather at herself for having mentioned them. "Squire Wells and his wife, with half-a-dozen more, carpeted me in the vestry after service this morning."

"What about?"

"About the duties of the parish; secular, not clerical: I take care that the latter shall be efficiently performed. The old women are not coddled, the younger ones' households not sufficiently looked up, and the school, in the point of plain sewing, is running to rack and ruin."

Mr. Baumgarten had been speaking in a half-joking way, his beautiful eyes alive with merriment. Miss Dane received the news more seriously "You did not say anything of this at dinner-time. You did not tell mamma."

"No. Why should I tell her? It might only worry her, you know. The school sewing is the worst grievance," he lightly ran on. "Dame Giles's

Betsy took some cloth with her which ought to have gone back a shirt, but which was returned a pair of pillow-cases: the dame boxed Betsy's ears, went to the school and nearly boxed Miss Turner's. It seems to me they could not have a better governess than she is. However, such mistakes, I am told, are often occurring, and the matrons of the parish are up in arms."

"But do they expect you to look after the sewing of the school?" breathlessly asked Edith.

"Not exactly; but they think I might provide a remedy: some one who would do so."

"How stupid they are! I'm sure Miss Turner does what she can with such a tribe. Not that I think she is particularly clever; and were there any lady who would superintend occasionally it might be better; mamma can't, but——"

"That is just it," interrupted Mr. Baumgarten, laughing. "They tell me I ought to help Miss Turner to a supervisor, by taking to myself a wife."

He looked at Edith as he spoke, and her face happened to be turned full upon him. The words dyed it with a glowing crimson, even to the roots of her soft brown hair. In her confusion she knew not whether to keep it where it was, or to turn it away: her eyelids had dropped, glowing also, and Edith Dane could have boxed her own ears as

heartily as Dame Giles had boxed the unhappy Miss Betsy's.

"It cannot be thought of, you know, Edith."

"What cannot?"

"My marrying. Marry on two hundred a-year, and expose my wife, and perhaps others, to poverty and privation? No, that I will never do."

"The parsonage must be put in repair if you marry," stammered Edith, not in the least knowing what she said, but compelling herself to say something so that she might appear unconcerned.

"And a great deal of money it would take to do it. I told Squire Wells if he could get my tithes increased to double their present value, then I might venture upon a wife. He laughed, and replied I might look out for a wife who had ten thousand pounds."

"Such wives are not easily found," murmured Edith Dane.

"Not by me," returned Mr. Baumgarten. "A college chum of mine, never dreaming to aspire to anything better than I possess now, married a rich young widow in the second year of his curacy, and lives on the fat of the land, in pomp and luxury. I would not have done it."

"Why?"

"Because no love went with it; even before his marriage he allowed himself to say as much to me—

disparaged her in fact. No; the school and the other difficulties, which are out of my line, must do as they can, yet awhile."

"Of course, mamma would be the proper person to continue to look after these things for you as she used to do, if she were not incapacitated."

"But she is, Edith. And your time is taken up with her, so that you cannot help me."

Miss Dane was silent. Had her time not been taken up, she fancied it might not be deemed quite the thing, in her censorious neighbourhood, to be going about in conjunction with Mr. Baumgarten; although she was the late Rector's daughter.

The Reverend Cyrus Dane had been many years Rector of Little Whitton; at his death Mr. Baumgarten was appointed. Mrs. Dane was left with a very slender provision, derived from an annuity. Her husband had been quite unable to save money: the needs of his parish, the education of his two daughters, and the expenses of living had utterly absorbed his stipend, and kept him sadly poor. So poor that the necessary repairs of the Rectory from year to year had never been attended to, and when he died it was in a woeful state of dilapidation. The eldest of his daughters, Charlotte, had married George Brice, a nephew of Brice the surgeon; he was junior partner in a shipping house, and lived in London.

When Mr. Baumgarten arrived to take possession of his new living, he found the Rectory perfectly uninhabitable. Mrs. Dane had moved out of it to Whitton Cottage, and it was arranged that he should take up his residence with her, paying a certain sum for his board. It was a comfortable arrangement for the young clergyman, and it was a help to Mrs. Dane. He had not the means to put the Rectory into repair, and was told that he must go to the late Rector's widow for them; that she was responsible for them, as in fact she was. But Mr. Baumgarten could not and would not do that. She had not the means to restore it any more than he had. So things were left as they were, to drift, and he made himself happy and contented at Whitton Cottage. He had just entered now upon the second year of his residence with them; during which Mrs. Dane had been seized with a slow and lingering illness, which must in time terminate fatally.

> "Why did she love him? Curious fool, be still;
> Is human love the growth of human will?"

A great deal happier for many of us if it were the growth of human will, or under its control. In too many instances it is born of association, of companionship; and thus had it been at Whitton Cottage. Thrown together in daily intercourse, an attachment had sprung up between the young Rector and Edith

Dane—a concealed attachment, for he considered his circumstances barred his marriage, and she hid her feelings as a matter of course. He was an ambitious man, a proud man, though perhaps not quite conscious of it, and to encounter the expenses of a family household upon small means appeared to him more to be shunned than any adverse fate on earth. Mr. Baumgarten was of gentle birth, but he had not any private fortune or near relatives; he had in fact no connections whatever to push him forward in the Church. For all he could see now, he might live and die in this slender living, and he did not like the prospect.

But we left him walking home from service with Edith, and they soon reached Whitton Cottage. Mr. Baumgarten went on at once to the little room he used as his study, but Edith, at the sound of wheels, lingered in the garden. The Countess of Avon's carriage drew up, and stopped at the gate. Miss Dane went out to it. Grace spoke first, her eyes running in all directions while she did so, as if they were in search of some object not in view.

"Edith, we could not go home without driving round to ask after your mamma."

"Thank you, Lady Grace. Mamma is in little pain to-day and her cough is not troublesome. I think her breathing is generally better in hot weather. Will you not come in?"

"Couldn't think of it, my dear," spoke up the countess. "Our dinner will be ready; you know I have to take it early. Grace forgot to order James round till we were half-way home."

"Has Mr. Baumgarten got back from church yet?" carelessly spoke Lady Grace, adjusting the lace of her summer mantle.

"He is in his study, I fancy," replied Edith, and she turned round to hide the blush called up by the question, just as Mr. Baumgarten approached them. At his appearance the blush in Grace Carmel's face rivalled that in Edith's.

"You surpassed yourself to-day," cried Lady Avon, as she shook hands with him. "I must hear that sermon again. Would you mind lending it to me?"

"Not at all," he replied, "if you can only make out my hieroglyphics. My writing is plain to me, but I do not know that it would be so to you, Lady Avon."

"When shall I have it? Will you bring it up this evening, and take tea with us? But you will find the walk long, perhaps, after your services to-day; and the weather is hot," she added.

"Very long; too far. Could you not return with us now, Mr. Baumgarten?" interposed her daughter. "Mamma will be glad of you to say grace at table."

Whether it pleased the countess or not, she had no

resource, in good manners, but to second the invitation so unceremoniously given. Mr. Baumgarten may have thought he had no resource but to acquiesce—out of good manners also, perhaps. He stood leaning over the carriage, and spoke, half-laughing—

"Am I to bring my sermon with me? If so, I must go in for it. I have just taken it from my pocket."

He came back with his sermon in its black cover. The seat of the carriage was exceedingly large, sweeping round in a half-circle. Lady Grace drew nearer to her mother, sitting quite back in the middle of the seat, and Mr. Baumgarten took his seat beside her. Edith Dane cast a look after them as the carriage rolled away; a pained, envious look; for her, the sunshine of the afternoon had gone out.

Miss Dane did not like these visits of his to Avon House, and he seemed to be often going there on one plea or another. There, he was surrounded by all the glory and pomp of stately life, and that is apt to tell upon a man's heart; Grace Carmel, too, was more beautiful than she, and singularly attractive. Not that Edith did, or could, suppose there was any real danger: the difference in their social positions barred that.

Some cloud, unexplained, and nearly forgotten now, had overshadowed Lady Avon's later life. It had

occurred, whatever it was, during the lifetime of her lord. She had chosen ever since to live at Avon House in retirement.

An inward complaint, real or fancied, had set in, and the countess thought herself unable to move to London. Lady Grace had been presented by her aunt, and passed one season in town: then she had returned to her mother, to share perforce in her retirement, at which she inwardly rebelled. Over and over again did Grace wish her brother would marry and come home; for the place was his, and it would compel her mother to quit it. But Lord Avon preferred his town house to his country one, and told his mother she was heartily welcome to stay in it. He liked a gay life better than a dull one: as all the world had known when he was young Viscount Standish.

It is just possible that the *ennui* of Grace's monotonous life at Avon had led to her falling in love with Mr. Baumgarten. That she had done so, that she loved him, with a strong and irrepressible passion, was certain; and she did not try to overcome it, but rather fostered it, seeking his society, dwelling upon his image. Had it occurred to her to fear that she might find a dangerous rival in Edith Dane? No; for she cherished the notion that Mr. Baumgarten was attached to herself, and Edith was supposed to

be engaged to a distant cousin; a young man who had been reading with her father during the last year of his life. The young fellow *had* wanted Edith; he asked her parents for her, he implored her to wait until he should be ordained. Edith had only laughed at him; but the report that they were engaged had in some way got about, and Lady Grace never doubted it. No; strange though it may seem to those who understand the exacting and jealous nature of love, Lady Grace never had cast a fear to Edith's being her rival.

This evening was but another of those Mr. Baumgarten sometimes spent at Avon House, feeding the flame of her ill-starred passion. His manner to women was naturally tender, and to Grace, with her fascinations brought unconsciously to bear upon him, dangerously warm. That he never for one moment had outstepped the bounds of friendly intercourse, Grace attributed entirely to the self-restraint imposed by his position; but she did not doubt he loved her in secret.

While at dinner he told them, jokingly, as he had told Edith, that the parish wanted him to marry. Lady Avon remarked, in answer, that he could not do better; parsons and doctors should always be married men.

"Yes, that's very right, very true," he returned,

in the same jesting tone. "But suppose they have nothing to marry upon?"

"But you have something, Mr. Baumgarten."

"Yes, I have two hundred a-year, and no residence."

"The Rectory is rather bad, I believe."

"Bad! Well, Lady Avon, you should see it."

"Mr. Dane ought not to have allowed it to get into that state," she remarked; and the subject dropped.

After dinner Mr. Baumgarten stood on the lawn with Grace, watching the glories of the setting sun. Lady Avon, indoors, was beginning to doze; they knew better than to disturb her; this after-dinner sleep, which sometimes did not last more than ten minutes, was of great moment to her, the doctor said. And indeed it was so: when she did not get it she invariably had a restless night, the overtired brain not suffering her to sleep. She took it in the dining-room; only moving to the drawing-room when she awoke. Great ceremony was not observed at Avon House. Six or eight servants comprised the indoor household, for the countess's jointure was extremely limited. The Avon peerage was not a rich one.

Mr. Baumgarten had held out his arm to Lady Grace in courtesy as they began to pace the paths, and she took it. They came to a halt near the entrance-gate, both gazing at the beautiful sky, their hands partially shading their eyes from the blaze of sunset,

when a little man dressed in black with a white necktie was seen approaching.

"Why, here comes Moore!" exclaimed Grace.

He was the clerk at Great Whitton Church. Limping up to the gate, for he was lame with rheumatism, he stood there and looked at Mr. Baumgarten, as if his business lay with him. But Grace, withdrawing her arm from her companion, was first at the gate.

"I beg pardon, my lady, I thought it right to come up and inform the countess of the sad news—and I'm glad I did, seeing you here, sir. Mr. Chester is gone, my lady."

"Gone!" exclaimed Grace. "Gone where?"

"He is dead, my lady—he is dead, sir. Departed to that bourn whence no traveller returns," continued the clerk, wishing to be religiously impressive, and believing he was quoting from Scripture.

"Surely it cannot be!" said Mr. Baumgarten.

"Ay, but it is, sir, more's the pity. And frightfully sudden. After getting home from afternoon service he said he felt uncommonly tired, he couldn't think why, and that he'd not have his tea till later in the evening. He went up to his room and sat down in the easy-chair there and dropped asleep. A sweet, tranquil sleep it was, to all appearance, and Mrs. Chester shut the door and left him. But after an hour or two, when she sent up to say he had better

wake up for his tea, they found him dead. The poor old lady is quite beside herself with the suddenness, and the maids be running about, all sixes-and-sevens."

"I will go down with you at once, Moore," said Mr. Baumgarten.

"But you will come back and tell us—and tell us how Mrs. Chester is?" said Lady Grace, as he was passing through the gate.

"Yes, certainly, if you wish it," he answered, walking away with so fleet a step that the clerk with difficulty kept up with him.

"I fancy it must have been on his mind, sir," said he; "not direct perhaps, but some inkling like of what was about to happen. This afternoon, when I'd took off his surplice in the vestry—it was him that had read prayers, as usual, Mr. Boyd preaching—I went and put things to rights a bit in the church, and when I got back to the vestry to lock up, I was surprised to see the Rector there still, sitting opposite the outer door, which stood open to the churchyard. Mr. Boyd was gone, but he was not. 'Don't you feel well, sir?' said I. 'Oh yes, I'm well,' he answered, 'but I'm tired. We must all get to feel tired when the end of our life is at hand, Moore, and mine has been a long one.' 'Yes, it has, sir, and a happy one too,' I said, 'thank God.' With that he rose up from his chair and lifted his hands towards heaven, looking up at

the blue sky. 'Thanks be to my merciful God,' he repeated solemnly, in a hushed sort of tone. 'For that, and all the other blessings of my past life on earth, thanks be unto Him!' With that, he took his hat and stick and walked out to the churchyard," concluded the clerk, "leaving me a bit dazed as 'twere, for I had never heard him talk like that before; he was not the sort o' man to do it."

Within an hour Mr. Baumgarten was back at Avon House. Lady Grace was still lingering in the garden in the summer twilight. He told her in a hushed voice all he had to tell; of the general state of things at the Rectory, of poor Mrs. Chester's sad distress.

"Mamma is expecting you," said Grace. "I broke the news to her, but she wants to hear more particulars."

They went into the drawing-room by the open doors of the window. Mr. Baumgarten gave the best account he could to Lady Avon, and then drank a cup of tea, standing; he would not wait to sit down for it. Still asking questions, Grace passed out again with him to the open air, and strolled by his side along the smooth broad path which led to the entrance-gate. When they reached it, he held out his hand to bid her good-evening. The opal sky was clear and beautiful; a large star shone in it.

"Great Whitton is in my brother's gift," she whis-

pered, as her hand rested in his. "I wish he would give it to you."

A flush rose to the young clergyman's face. To exchange Little Whitton for Great Whitton had now and then made one of the flighty dreams of his ambition —but never really cherished.

"Do not mock me with pleasant visions, Lady Grace. I can have no possible interest with Lord Avon."

"You could marry then," she softly said, in reference to the conversation at dinner, "and set the parish grumblers at defiance."

"Marry? Yes, I should—I hope—do so," was his reply. His voice was as soft as her own, his speech hesitating; he was thinking of Edith Dane.

But how was Lady Grace to divine that? She alas! gave altogether a different interpretation to the words; and her heart beat with a tender throbbing, and her lips parted with love and hope, and she gazed after him until he disappeared in the shadows of the sweet summer night.

## CHAPTER II.

### A CURIOUS MISTAKE.

THE Countess of Avon, persuaded into it by her daughter, exacted a promise from her son that he would bestow the living of Great Whitton upon the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten.

The earl did not give an immediate consent; in fact, he demurred to giving it at all, and sundry letters passed to and fro between Avon House and Paris—for his lordship happened just then to have taken a run over to the French capital. Great Whitton was too good a thing to be thrown away upon young Baumgarten, who was nobody, he told his mother, and he should like to give it to Elliotsen; but Lady Avon, for peace' sake at home, urged her petition strongly, and the earl at length granted it and gave the promise.

The morning the letter arrived containing the promise, and also the information that his lordship was back at his house in London, Lady Avon was

feeling unusually ill, and did not get up. Her head was aching violently, and she bade her maid put the letter aside; she would open it later. This she did in the afternoon, when she was sitting up in her dressing-room, and she then told Grace of the arrival of the unexpected promise.

"Oh, let me see it!" exclaimed Grace, in her incautious excitement, holding out her hand for the letter.

She read it hungrily, with flushing cheeks and trembling fingers. Lady Avon could but note this. It somewhat puzzled her.

"Grace," she said, "I cannot think why you should be so eager about this. What does it matter to you who gets the living—whether Mr. Baumgarten or another?"

Grace read to the end and folded up the letter before answering. She was a model of calmness now.

"It would be very annoying to us, mamma, if some dolt of a man got it—and Henry, as you know, has no discrimination. Mr. Baumgarten is safe. He is suitable in all respects; thoroughly capable, and a gentleman. Besides, *you* like him."

"Well, I do," assented Lady Avon.

In the evening, when Grace was sauntering listlessly in the rocky walk, wondering whether any one

would call that night or not, she saw him. *Him.* He was coming along the path from the Rectory. The old Rector had been buried some days now.

"I have been sitting with Mrs. Chester, and thought I would just ask, in passing, how Lady Avon is," he remarked, swinging through the gate, as if he would offer an apology for calling. "The last time I was here she seemed so very poorly."

"She is not any better, I am sorry to say; to-day she has not come downstairs at all," replied Grace, meeting his offered hand. "What will you give me for some news I can tell you?" she resumed, standing before him in the full glow of her beauty, her hand not yet withdrawn from his.

He bent his sweet smile down upon her, his deep, dark eyes speaking the admiration that he might not utter. Ryle Baumgarten was no more insensible to the charms of a fascinating and beautiful girl than are other men—despite his love for Edith Dane. She was awaiting an answer.

"What may I give?" he said. "Nothing that I could give would be of value to you."

"How do you know that, Mr. Baumgarten?"

With a burning blush, for she had spoken unguardedly, Grace laughed merrily, stepped a few steps backward, and drew a letter from her pocket.

"It is one that came to mamma this morning, and it

has a secret in it. What *will* you give me to read you just one little sentence?"

Mr. Baumgarten, but that Edith and his calling were in the way, would have said a shower of kisses: it is possible that he might in spite of both, had he dared. Whether his looks betrayed him cannot be known; Lady Grace, blushing still, took refuge in the letter.

Folding it so that only the signature was visible, she held it out to him. He read the name, "Henry."

"Is it—from—Lord Avon?" he said, with hesitation.

"It is from Lord Avon. He does not sign himself in any other way to us. 'Your ever affectionate son, Henry,' it always runs to mamma: and it is no unmeaning phrase; he is very fond of her. But now for the secret. Listen."

Mr. Baumgarten, suspecting nothing, listened with a smile.

"'I have been dunned with applications since I got home,'" read Grace, aloud, from Lord Avon's letter, "'some of them from personal friends; but as you and Grace make so great a point of it, mother, I promise you that Mr. Baumgarten shall have Great Whitton.'" In reading, she had left out the words "and Grace." She closed the letter, and then stole a glance at his face.

It had turned pale to seriousness.

"I do not quite understand," he said.

"No? It means that you are appointed to Great Whitton."

"How can I ever sufficiently thank Lord Avon?" he breathed forth.

"Now, is not the knowing that worth something?" laughed she.

"Oh, Lady Grace! It is worth far more than anything I have to give in return. But—it is not a jest, is it? Can it be really true?"

"A jest! Is that likely? You will be publicly appointed in a day or two, and will, of course, hear from my brother. I am not acquainted, myself, with the formal routine of these things. Mamma is rejoicing. she would rather have you here than any one."

"Lady Avon is too kind," he murmured abstractedly.

"And what do you think mamma said? Shall I tell you? 'Mr. Baumgarten can marry now.' Those were her words."

Grace spoke with sweet sauciness, secure in the fact that he could not divine her feelings for him—although she believed in his love for her. His answer surprised her.

"Yes, I can marry now," he assented, still half lost in his own thoughts. "I shall do so—soon. I

have only waited until some preferment should justify it."

"You are a bold man, Mr. Baumgarten, to make so sure of the lady's consent. Have you asked it?"

"No: where was the use, until I could speak to some purpose? But she has detected my wishes, I am sure of that: and there is no coquetry in Edith."

"Edith!" almost shrieked Lady Grace. "I beg your pardon; I shall not fall."

"What have you done? You have hurt yourself!"

They had been walking close to the miniature rocks, and she had seemed to stumble over a projecting corner.

"I gave my ankle a twist. The pain was sharp," she moaned.

"Pray lean on me, Lady Grace; pray let me support you: you are as white as death."

He wound his arms gently round her, and laid her pallid face upon his shoulder; he thought she was going to faint. For one single moment she yielded to the fascination of the beloved resting-place. Oh! that it could be hers for ever! She shivered, raised her head, and drew away from him.

"Thank you," she said faintly; "the anguish has passed. I must go indoors now."

Mr. Baumgarten held out his arm, but she did not take it, walking alone with rapid steps towards the

house. At the entrance of the glass-doors she turned to him:

"I will wish you good-evening now."

He held out his hand, but she did not appear to see it. She ran in, and he turned away to depart, thinking she must be in great pain.

Lady Grace shut herself in the drawing-room. For a few moments she rushed about as one possessed, in her torrent of anger. As Congreve tells us, "Hell has no fury as a woman scorned."

Then she sat down to her writing-desk, and dashed off a blotted and hasty note to Lord Avon—which would just save the post:—

"Give the living to any one you please, Harry, but not to Ryle Baumgarten; bestow it where you will, but not on him. There are reasons why he would be utterly unfit for it. Explanations when we meet."

During this, Mr. Baumgarten was hastening home, the great news surging in his brain. Edith was at the gate, not looking for him, of course; merely enjoying the air of the summer's night. That's what she said she was doing when he came up. He caught her by the waist, and drew her between the trees and the privet-hedge, and began to kiss her. She cried out, and gazed at him in wonder.

"Edith, do you think I am mad? I believe I am—mad with joy; for the time has come that I may ask you to be my wife."

"Your wife?" she stammered, for in truth that prospect had seemed farther off than heaven.

He drew her to him again in the plenitude of his emotion. Her heart beat wildly against his, and he laid her face upon his breast, more fondly than he had laid another's, not long before.

"You know how I have loved you: you must have seen it, though I would not speak; but I could not marry while my income was so small. It would not have been right, Edith."

"If you think so—no."

"But, oh, my dearest, I may speak now. Will you be my wife?"

"But—what has happened?" she asked.

"Ah, what! Promotion has come to me, my dear one. I am presented to the living of Great Whitton."

"Of Great Whitton! Ryle!"

"It is quite sure. Lord Avon's mother asked him to give it to me, it seems, and he generously complied. Edith, will you reject me, now I have Great Whitton?"

She hid her face; she felt him lovingly stroking her hair. "I would not have rejected you when you had only Little Whitton, Ryle."

"Yours is not the first fair face which has been there this night, Edith," he said in a laughing whisper. "I had Lady Grace's there but an hour ago."

A shiver seemed to dart through her heart. Her jealousy of Lady Grace had been almost as powerful as her love for Mr. Baumgarten.

"Grace said, in a joking sort of way, that her mother had remarked I could marry now I had Great Whitton. So I told Grace that I should do so—one word leads to another, you know, Edith—and that I had only waited for preferment to marry you, my best love. As I was speaking, she managed somehow to twist her ankle. The pain must have been intense, for she turned as white as death, and I had to hold her to me. But I did not pay myself for my trouble, as I am doing now—with kisses."

She lifted her face up and looked into his. "You would only have liked to do so, Ryle."

"I have liked to do so!" he repeated, smothering back a glimmer of consciousness. "Edith, my whole love is yours."

A little more love-making, a little more lingering in the soft shade of the evening twilight, and then they went in together and told the great news to Mrs. Dane.

Some days passed on. Lady Avon rather wondered

that she did not hear more from her son, but supposed he had written direct to Mr. Baumgarten. Grace said nothing. The two lovers, over at Whitton Cottage, were busily planning out the future.

One morning there was a startling announcement in the *Times*. As Lady Avon's eyes fell upon it she truly thought they must be playing her false, that her sight was failing her.

The living of Great Whitton was bestowed upon the Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen, a personal friend of the Earl of Avon.

Her ladyship called out for her daughter in commotion; she sent her maid, Charity, to hasten her. Grace feared her mother was worse, and flew to the room with rapid steps.

"What can be the meaning of this, Grace?" gasped the countess. "Henry has not given the living to Mr. Baumgarten, after all; he has given it to young Elliotsen!"

"Oh, indeed," said Grace, carelessly. "Harry can do as he likes, I suppose."

"No, he can't, in such a case as this. At least he ought not to. Once his promise was given to me it should have been kept. I cannot understand his going from it. It is not like him."

"Well, mamma, I don't see that it matters to us, whichever way it may be."

"But it does matter. I don't want a simpering young fellow like Wilfred Elliotsen down here, and whose wife goes in for rank Puseyism besides. She has only been waiting for his appointment to a church, report says, to make him play all kinds of antics in it; she leads him by the nose."

Grace laughed.

"It is no laughing matter," reproved her mother, "for me or Mr. Baumgarten. I shall be ashamed to look him in the face. And he had begun to lay out plans for his marriage with Miss Dane and their life at Great Whitton!"

"How do you know that?" asked Grace, quickly.

"Mrs. Brice told me so when she was here yesterday," replied Lady Avon. "She knew from the Danes that Ryle Baumgarten was to have Great Whitton and to marry Edith. Why Henry should be so changeable I cannot imagine."

Lady Avon was evidently very much annoyed, and justly so; annoyed at the fact, and annoyed because she was unable to understand her son, who was neither capricious nor inconsiderate. She wrote a letter of complaint to him that day, and awaited his answer.

The ill news broke abruptly upon Mr. Baumgarten. The little hard-worked, inoffensive doctor, Mr. Brice, who had a kind heart and never failed to have a kind word for his patients, chanced to see in the *Times* the

same paragraph that Lady Avon saw, and on the same morning.

"Bless my heart," he exclaimed, "what an unlucky thing! How could Baumgarten have made such a mistake? He said Lady Grace told him. Perhaps it was she who mistook the matter!"

Away he hastened to Whitton Cottage, the newspaper in his pocket, and into the clergyman's presence, who sat in his little study writing a sermon. And when he got there, he felt at fault how to open the ball. It seemed so cruel a thing to do. Mr. Baumgarten, who looked gay and unconscious, led up to it.

"Have you heard any particular news this morning?" began the surgeon, after a few words had passed.

"No," lightly replied Mr. Baumgarten; "I've not seen any one to tell me any; I have been busy since breakfast with my sermon for next Sunday. Nearly the last I shall preach at Little Whitton, I expect."

Mr. Brice coughed. "Have you heard from Lord Avon?" he asked.

"Not yet; I rather wonder at it. Every morning I look for a letter from him, but it does not come. He may be in France again for all I know myself; I don't like to call at Avon House until my appointment is confirmed. It would look pushing; as if I were impatient."

"Well, I—I saw a curious paragraph in the newspaper just now about Great Whitton being given away; but it was another name that was mentioned, not yours," said Mr Brice. "I thought I'd come here at once to see if you knew anything about it."

"Not anything, newspapers are always making mistakes," smiled Mr. Baumgarten.

Mr. Brice took the paper from his pocket. Finding the place, he laid it before the clergyman, who read it. Read it twice over, and began to feel somewhat less easy. He read it a third time, aloud.

"'We are authorized to state that the valuable living of Great Whitton, Homeshire, has been bestowed by its patron, the Earl of Avon, upon the Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen.'"

There ensued a pause. The two gentlemen were looking at one another, each questioningly.

"It must be a mistake," said Mr. Baumgarten. "Lord Avon would not give the living to me, and then give it to some one else."

"The question is—did he give it to you?" returned Mr. Brice. "Perhaps the mistake lies in your having thought so."

"I saw it in his own handwriting, in his letter to his mother. Lady Grace showed it to me; at least, a portion of it. He wrote in answer to an appeal Lady Avon had made to him to give me the living.

His promise was a positive one. It is this newspaper that makes the mistake, Brice; it cannot be otherwise."

"Any way, we will hope so," briskly added the surgeon. But he spoke more confidently than he felt, and perhaps Mr. Baumgarten had done the same.

Lord Avon's reply to his mother's letter of complaint and inquiry came to her by return of post, and ran as follows:—

"My dear Mother,

"I cancelled my promise of giving the living to Baumgarten at Grace's request. She wrote to me post haste some days ago, telling me there were reasons why Baumgarten would be utterly unfit to hold Great Whitton, and begging me to bestow it upon any one rather than upon him. That is all I know; you must ask an explanation of Grace. Of course I assumed she was writing for you. It is settled now, and too late to change back again. Elliotsen will do very well in the living, I dare say. As to his wife wanting to turn and twist him to attempt foolish things in the church, as you seem to fear, I think it hardly likely. If she does, he must put her down.

"Ever your loving son,

"Henry."

"Yes, I *did* write to Henry, mamma; I *did* ask him not to give the living to Mr. Baumgarten," avowed Grace, with passionate emphasis when questioned, her cheeks aflame, for the subject excited and tried her. "My reason was that I consider him an unfit man to hold it."

"Why, it was at your request that I asked Henry to give it to Mr. Baumgarten; you gave me no peace until I consented," retorted Lady Avon.

"But, after reflection, I came to the conclusion that I ought not to have pressed it, that he ought not to have it, and would not do in it; and the shortest way to mend the matter was by writing to Harry. That's all."

Lady Avon glanced keenly at her daughter. She was mentally asking herself what it all meant—the burning face, the tone sharp as a knife and telling of pain, the capricious conduct in regard to the preferment. But she could not tell: she might have her suspicions, and very ridiculous suspicions too, not at all to be entertained; but she could not tell.

"I am sorry that a daughter of mine should have condescended to behave so; you best know what motive prompted it, Grace. To bestow a living and then snatch it away again in caprice is sheer child's play. It will be a cruel blow to Ryle Baumgarten."

A cruel blow it was. Lady Avon turned to her

desk after speaking these words to her daughter, and began a note to the young clergyman, feeling very much humbled in mind as she wrote it. In the most plausible way she could, a lame way at best, she apologized for the mistake which had been made, adding she hardly knew whether it might be attributed to her son, to herself, or to both, and pleaded for Mr. Baumgarten's forgiveness. This note she despatched by her footman to Whitton Cottage.

Mr. Baumgarten chanced to be standing in the little hall as the man approached. He received the note from him.

"Is there any answer to take back, sir? My lady did not say."

"I will see," replied Mr. Baumgarten. "Sit down, Robert."

Shutting himself into his study, he opened the note. For a few happy moments—if moments of suspense ever can be happy—he indulged in a vision that all might still be right; that the note was to tell him so. It was short, filling only one side of the paper, and he stood while he read it.

Before he had quite come to the end, before he had well gathered in its purport, a shock, singular in its effects, struck Mr. Baumgarten. Whether his breath stopped, or the circulation of his heart stopped, or the coursing of his pulses stopped, he could not have told;

but he sank down in a chair powerless, the letter falling on the table from his nerveless hand. A strange, beating movement stirred him inwardly, his throat was gasping, his eyelids were fluttering, a sick faintness had seized upon him.

But that he struggled against it with desperate resolution, he believed he should have fainted. Once before he had felt something like this, when he was an undergraduate at Oxford, and had been rowing against time to win a match. They said then, those around him, that he had over-exercised his strength. But he had not been exercising his strength now, and he was far worse this time than he had been then.

He sat perfectly still, his arms supported by the elbows of the chair, and recovered by degrees. After a bit, he took up Lady Avon's note to read it more fully, and then he knew and realized that all to which he had been so ardently looking forward was at an end.

The servant was seated in the little hall, quietly waiting, when Mr. Baumgarten came out of his study.

"Her ladyship's note does not require an answer, Robert," he said, with apparent coolness. "How is she to-day?"

"Middling, sir. She seemed much upset this morning, Charity told us, by a letter she got from his lordship in London," added Robert. "Good-day, sir."

Mr. Baumgarten nodded in answer. He stood at the door looking out, apparently watching the man away. The sun was shining in Ryle Baumgarten's face, but the sun which had been latterly shining on his heart, illuminating it with colours of the brightest and sweetest phantasy—that sun seemed to have set for ever.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE EARL OF AVON.

THE Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen took possession of the living of Great Whitton, having been appointed to it by Lord Avon. And the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten remained, as before, at Little Whitton.

Changes took place. They take place everywhere. The most notable one was the marriage of Mr. Baumgarten.

That he had been grievously disappointed and annoyed at the appointment of another to the living, which he had been led to suppose would be his, was a bitter fact. He set it down to the caprice of great men, and strove to live down the sting. The chief difficulty lay in his contemplated marriage: and he deliberated with himself whether he ought for the present to abandon it or to carry it out. He decided upon the latter course. It is probable that he deemed he could not in honour withdraw now; and it is more

than probable that, once having allowed himself to cherish his hopes and his love, he was not stoic enough to put them from him again. Finally, he resolved to leave the decision to Edith Dane.

"What do you say, Edith?" he asked her. "Shall we throw prudence to the winds, and come together for better, for worse?"

"Nay, Ryle, it is for you to decide that," she answered, a hundred blushes on her pretty cheeks.

"I think not," he answered. "For I should decide it all one way; and it might not, for you, be the best way. Should you be afraid to risk housekeeping on my stipend, Edith? Two hundred a-year, you know, my love, all told."

"No, I should not," she whispered.

"So be it, then," he answered. "And, with your mother's permission, we will have the wedding at once."

Mrs. Dane gave the permission readily. As long as she lived, and was with them, her small income would augment theirs. And within a month of Mr. Baumgarten's disappointment he and Edith became man and wife.

"You do quite right," warm-hearted little Mr. Brice had assured them. "The cuttings and contrivings necessary to make a small income go as far as a large one render a young couple all the happier. *I* ought

to know: mine was small enough for many a year of my married life; it's not much else now."

The autumn was advancing when Lord Avon came down to pay a visit to his mother. His lordship brought with him full intentions to have it out with her, and with Grace, about that matter in the summer. He began with his mother. She knew no more of it than he did, she protested resentfully, for she was still sore upon the point. All she could say was that he had written to promise her the living for Mr. Baumgarten, and then gave it to Wilfred Elliotsen.

Grace was more impervious still. She simply refused to discuss the subject at all, telling her brother to hold his tongue.

"I don't see why you should blame *me*, mother," remonstrated the young man. "It was certainly no fault of mine."

"It was your fault, Henry," retorted Lady Avon.

"I told you of Grace's peremptory letter."

"Who but you would heed the wild letter of a girl? You should have waited for me to confirm it. As I did not do so, you ought to have written to me before acting. I did not myself care for Mr. Baumgarten to have Great Whitton—it was Grace who worried me into asking it of you; but as you promised it to him, it should have been his. You cannot picture

to yourself, Henry, half the annoyance it has cost me."

Lord Avon could picture it very well. All this arose from Grace's absurd caprice. She had been indulged all her life, and did just as she pleased.

"And for you to put so silly a young fellow as Elliotsen into it!" went on Lady Avon, enlarging on her grievances. "I told you his wife would make him play all kinds of pranks in the church."

"What does he do?" asked Lord Avon.

"Very ridiculous things indeed. He has put a lot of brass candlesticks on the communion-table, and he turns himself about and bows down at different parts of the service, and she sweeps her head forward in a fashion that sets the whole church staring. We are not used to these innovations, Henry."

Lady Avon was correct in saying so. The innovations were innovations in those days; now they are looked upon almost as matters of history, as if they had come in with William the Conqueror.

"And the parish is not pleased with them?" returned Lord Avon.

"Pleased with them!" echoed his mother. "He began by wanting to make every soul in the parish, labourers and all, attend daily service in the church from eight o'clock to nine, allowing them ten minutes for breakfast and fifty for prayers; and she has

dressed the Sunday school in scarlet cloaks, with a large white linen cross sewn down the back. One thing is not liked at all: the inexperienced rustics cannot be made to understand which way he wants them to turn at the Creeds; so he has planted some men behind the free benches every Sunday with long white wands, and the moment the Belief begins, down come the wands, rapping the heads of the doubtful ones.* You have no idea of the commotion it causes."

Lord Avon burst into a laugh. "I'd have run down for a Sunday before this had I known the fun that was going on," said he. "The girls must take care the bulls don't run at their scarlet cloaks."

"Ah, Henry, you young men regard these things only as matters for irreverent joking. Mr. Baumgarten would not have served us so."

"I suppose not. Do you get up to attend the early week-day service, mother?"

"Not I. I can say my prayers more quietly at home. Elliotsen does not force the rich to the early service; only the poor—when he can do so. He tells us he leaves it between ourselves and our consciences."

"You'd be geese if you went," said my lord. "I'll talk to him."

* An absolute fact; occurring in a rural church at the time such movements began, many years ago.

"It will not do any good, Henry. If you talked to *her* perhaps it might; it is she who has done it all."

And Lord Avon laughed again. He was a man of middle height, spare and angular, with a kindly, honest face, but not a handsome or a clever one.

Presently he walked out. In one of the pleasant green lanes with which the place abounded he suddenly encountered Brice, the surgeon, who was coming along at a steaming pace.

"Walking for a wager?" cried he.

"That's it; your lordship has just hit it," replied the surgeon, grasping warmly the ready hand held out to him. "I and Time often have a match together, and sometimes he wins and sometimes I do."

They had always been good friends, these two, from the time when the boy, Henry Carmel—for it was before his father came into the title—would fall into no end of outdoor random scrapes, and the little doctor, as far as he could, shielded him and brought him out of them. The earl then reigning was a valetudinarian, Henry's uncle, and the boy spent three parts of his time with him at Avon House.

"When did you come down?" asked Mr. Brice.

"Only this morning. My mother seems pretty well, I think?"

"Y—es," assented the surgeon, with slight hesitation. "She could be much better, though, if she'd let

the world wag its own way, and not trouble herself trying to set it to rights."

"Meaning the new parson and his new ways?" laughed Lord Avon, who talked more freely with the surgeon than he would have done with any one else. "She has been treating me to a history of the nonsense."

"Well, and it is nonsense; just that," said Mr. Brice. "I ventured to say a few words of remonstrance to Mr. Elliotsen one day. 'Oh,' answered he, good-naturedly, 'but these new ways are all the rage in the fashionable world now.' 'May be so, sir,' said I; 'but what suits a fashionable congregation does not suit a rustic parish.' 'Not all at once,' he readily answered, 'but they'll get used to it, Brice, they'll get used to it.' Perhaps they may."

"I'm sure my mother never will," spoke Lord Avon. "To begin with, she dislikes Elliotsen. At least, she disliked his coming to Great Whitton."

"She wanted Mr. Baumgarten to have it."

Lord Avon looked surprised. "Did you know of that, Brice?"

"Most of us knew of it down here. For several days, more than a week, I think, it was understood that you had actually given him the living."

"What—understood publicly?"

"Publicly and privately too. Baumgarten began

to make preparations for moving into the Rectory; he arranged with old Mrs. Chester to take over some of her furniture. It was the certainty he had shown which made it so mortifying for him when the upshot came."

To judge by Lord Avon's face just now some of the mortification had travelled to himself. He was looking through the branches of the trees overshadowing the lane, their foliage beautiful with the changing tints of autumn, his far-off gaze bent on the blue sky beyond the hills, as if seeking a solution there of something he could not understand.

"I was sorry myself," said Mr. Brice. "Lady Avon talked to me, and Mrs. Dane talked to me, lamenting your caprice—if I may presume to say it, my lord," he added, with a twinkle. "It tried Mrs. Dane much."

"It was not caprice, Brice. I did give Mr. Baumgarten the living; that is, I gave my mother a promise it should be his, which is the same thing; and I afterwards retracted the promise and gave it to Elliotsen. Of course it looked like caprice, and very shameful caprice; but—but," Lord Avon hesitated, "you will believe me, I dare say, when I tell you I was not to blame."

"In my own mind I could not at the time think you were. It was not like you. How was it?"

"It is a thing which I cannot explain, Brice, even

to you. A mistake was made in—well, let us say in more quarters than one. It has been put down to my score hitherto, I find, and it can continue to be so. I am very, very sorry, if it tried Mrs. Dane."

Mr. Brice recounted the past circumstances in a few words. Lord Avon listened.

"So Baumgarten and Edith married on the strength of possessing Great Whitton!" he remarked. "I wish —I wish——"

"No; they got engaged on the strength of possessing it—and were married all the same when they knew they should not have it," interrupted the surgeon. "Their prospects are not grand; the living is small, as I dare say you know, and there's no habitable house."

Lord Avon nodded. Little Whitton was not in his gift, and he did not personally know Mr. Baumgarten.

"Naturally Mrs. Dane feels anxious about their future. When she dies her income dies with her. And two or three months will about bring the end. I have just left her sitting under the pear-tree in the garden; she is out of doors most fine days. And, upon my word, I must be going on," concluded the doctor.

They shook hands and parted. Lord Avon strolled onwards with a clouded face. When staying at Avon House, a boy, he used to go over to Mr. Dane to do

Latin with him in the daytime; Mrs. Dane was very fond of the boy, and he was fond of her. He would rather, now that he was a man, have brought vexation upon every one in the two parishes than upon Mrs. Dane.

"If ever Grace gets me into a bother of this kind again she shall pay for it!" thought his lordship.

By-and-by he came in view of Whitton Cottage. Mrs. Dane was still seated under the pear-tree. Seeing Lord Avon, she waved her hand to him, and he opened the gate and entered.

"What a stranger you are!" were her first words.

He kept her hand in his as he sat down on the bench beside her. She had a light fleecy kerchief thrown over her white net cap and a warm shawl wrapped about her shoulders. Her face, always a delicate one, looked ominously so now; it was so changed as to give Lord Avon an unpleasant thrill.

"Dear Mrs. Dane! I am sure you have been very ill."

"I have been, and am," she answered. "You see the difference in me, don't you?"

"I confess I do," he acknowledged. "Cannot Brice do anything better for you?"

"No one can in this world," she gently said. "The last days here must come for us all, and they are upon me. Ah, my dear, if we, all of us, can but be prepared

for them!—you see I talk to you with the familiarity of old days," she concluded, a smile upon her wan face.

"I hope you will never talk to me in any other way," he said, with earnest impulse. "Do you remember how you used to lecture me: 'Henry, I will not have you do this'—'Henry, you must do the other!' Why, you know you were as good to me as a mother."

"I like to sit and think of the days gone by," she said, "and I very often think of you. When we old people are no longer able to employ our time at useful work we find occupation in recalling the past; a great pleasure lies in it."

"You are not old, dear Mrs. Dane."

"I am not quite fifty yet, my dear, but I am old in one sense—that I am close upon the end of life. Those who are so may surely be called old, estimating age, you see, by the duration of their time here. And, do you know," she added, in low, loving tones, "that when we reach this stage we almost long for the final change—for the better, brighter life which is waiting for us."

"But you must have regrets," said Lord Avon.

"True. All must have them in a degree. We cannot help regretting this world, the only home we have known. It has not been all sunshine; rather, perhaps, one of storm; yet we know its best and its

worst, and we are entering one which we do not know, and so there must always lie within us a half wish to stay here longer. And then—and then—— "

Mrs. Dane's voice sank to a whisper. She paused.

"And then?" he softly whispered.

"And then God's loving Presence resumes its sway within us with all its reassuring comfort, and regrets are lost in a glow of happiness. May it be with you, my dear, when your own turn shall come!"

Lord Avon swallowed down a lump in his throat. Mrs. Dane's hand was still in his; he pressed it gratefully, and there ensued a silence.

"It must seem hard to you, though, to leave your children here."

"Yes; especially Edith. I have not seen much of Charlotte since her marriage; she is coming down now to stay a week or two. Edith is married also."

"Yes," he assented; but the subject was not a pleasant one. Mrs. Dane pursued it.

"I feel anxious about Edith. I cannot help fearing that she is not strong; that if the battle of life should prove fierce she will not be able to breast it. She is lying down now. Their income is small, and they have no residence, as we had. Mr. Baumgarten means to take pupils; but there is a difficulty in that also."

"In what way?"

"This cottage is not adapted for pupils, it could not

accommodate them; and, besides the risk which taking a larger house might involve, furniture would be needed—and that also involves cost."

"Yes," said Lord Avon. "Are there no daily pupils to be had?"

"Not any; not one that we can think of. People like to send their boys out, now, to public schools or large private ones. Some nights I lie awake reproaching myself for having sanctioned Edith's marriage. When matters were first arranged for it, Mr. Baumgarten understood he was to have Great Whitton—perhaps you know that. And then, when it was found to have been a mistake, he still said he would marry, and I did not dissent. Of course it was an awkward and unfortunate thing altogether, and—— But I do not wish to enter into it," broke off Mrs. Dane. "Edith is very happy, and we must hope for the best—— "

"Let me say a word to you, dear Mrs. Dane," he interrupted; "I used to bring my secrets to you in the days of yore. Do you remember one in particular? A boy got into the pond of Great Whitton, and was nearly drowned, and I had the credit of having pushed him in, and was punished for it by Mr. Dane."

"I remember it well, Henry," she said, calling him unconsciously by the old familiar name. "It was Jack Whittaker."

"Just so. Every one fell upon my devoted head, reproaching me with being a wicked and cruel youngster, safe to come to a bad end. I took their abuse quietly, and I took Mr. Dane's punishment—a fearful task of Greek, which to me was punishment in earnest; and when the thing was all over and done with, I whispered the truth to you one day in your dressing-room, as you were sewing up a rent which I had torn in my jacket-sleeve—that it was not I who had thrown Whittaker into the pond. Did you believe me?"

"Yes, my dear, I did believe you; to me you were ever truthful. You would not tell me who it was that threw him in, though; I recollect that."

"I'll tell you now. It was Jack himself."

"Jack Whittaker threw himself in?"

Lord Avon nodded. "He had been at some mischief at Mr. Chester's—stealing the apricots, I believe; and he was getting away when he heard a hue and cry behind him. In his terror, for Whittaker was an arrant coward, he dashed to the side of the pond, meaning to hide himself among the rushes; missing his footing, he dashed right into it. I was standing by and saw the process. After all, the noise was not in pursuit of him, but of a bull which had got loose from Farmer Ulthorn's field."

"Why did you take the punishment?"

"When he floundered out, like a drowned rat, I helping him, he begged and implored of me not to say that he had jumped in. I gave him my word I would not. That's how it was. Well, you believed me then, dear Mrs. Dane, and I know you will believe me now. You have blamed me in your heart for promising Great Whitton to Mr. Baumgarten, and then annulling it by bestowing it elsewhere, but—the fault did not lie with me."

"No! With Lady Avon, perhaps."

"No, no, no; she wished Mr. Baumgarten to have it. The whole affair was the result of an unfortunate mistake. I committed it, but in unconscious error, which I and my mother alike regret. Suffer this explanation to rest quite between ourselves, please. I should not have made it, but that I cannot bear for the dear old friend of my boyhood to think unkindly of me. I saw Jack Whittaker the other day," continued Lord Avon, his tone changing to a lighter one as he rose to depart. "We met in Piccadilly."

"How is Jack getting on?"

"Very well, I believe. He has his post in the Red Tape Office and a good income besides from his uncle's property. He told me he had married a charming girl, asked me if I would not go down to see her. They live on the banks of the Thames, somewhere near Richmond."

"How long shall you remain here?" questioned Mrs. Dane, as she held his hand in parting.

"Only a few days. I am going into Warwickshire for some shooting. Give my love to Edith—if that's a proper message to a young lady who is married," he concluded, laughing.

As he was walking homewards, a clergyman, walking quickly, met and passed him. A young man, tall and stately, whose dark, deep-set, beautiful eyes looked somewhat inquiringly at Lord Avon, and the latter knew it must be the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten. But Mr. Baumgarten did not guess that the unpretending, homely-faced stranger was the nobleman who had served him that cruel trick.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LAST JOURNEY.

MR. BAUMGARTEN came softly forth from his house in the brightness of the early summer morning, closing the door noiselessly behind him, that he might not disturb his wife above. She was in delicate health, and he had left her asleep. He was on his way to a sick parishioner, now lying in danger

When Mrs. Baumgarten awoke, not long afterwards, she lay thinking of a dream she had just had. So real and vivid did it seem that at first she wondered where she was, and looked round at the familiar objects of the bedchamber in doubt.

"Why, it was only a dream!" she exclaimed. "I am at home, and in my own bed. But where's Ryle?"

It was unusual for him to be away so early. Then she remembered that he had said last night he must go at seven o'clock to old Miss Knightley's, who was dangerously ill.

Presently she got up, and dressed herself with

trembling fingers. She was weak, and languid, and hot; always in a fever now. Looking about for the coolest dress she had, she put it on: a black-and-white muslin. They were in mourning for Mrs. Dane. She had died the previous winter. Summer had come round again, and it was nearly a year now since Edith's marriage.

When she had quite finished—dressing, and reading, and prayers—she sat down in an easy-chair before the open window, letting the sweet morning air fan her hectic face. The sun shone in the blue sky; the scent of new-mown hay came from a meadow, the hum of bees sounded drowsily in the heat; butterflies fluttered across the lawn from flower to flower.

As the clock struck eight Mr. Baumgarten returned; he nodded to Edith from the garden, came in, and ran upstairs. It was their breakfast hour.

"I hoped to find you asleep still, Edith," he said. "I wish you would breakfast in bed."

"Oh, Ryle, I could not; I am glad to be up—bed tires me, I think. How is Miss Knightley?"

"Somewhat better. Brice was there before me. They think now she may rally."

He was standing before her at the opposite side of the window, partly leaning from it.

"Ryle," she said, smiling, "I have had such a lovely dream!"

"Indeed! It is not often you dream. What was it?"

"No, scarcely ever. When Charlotte and I were children, she used to tell her dreams of a morning. I felt quite jealous, because I never had any to tell."

"Well, what was this one?"

"I thought I had a long, long journey to take, and as I set out from the door here and walked down the path to the gate, I looked round and saw you in the parlour alone. I don't know where I went, or which way; it was all strange to me. It seemed as if I went miles and miles and miles; more than I can reckon; more than there are miles in the world. But oh, the way was lovely. The air was so light and balmy that I seemed to float along in an ecstasy. The most enchanting flowers, sweeter and lovelier and more brilliant than we can imagine out of a dream, grew on each side the way. It seemed that I had never known before what happiness was, what enjoyment meant; and it was all so vivid that when I awoke I thought it was reality."

"A pleasant dream," remarked Mr. Baumgarten. "How did it end?"

"It had no ending. I was still gliding along amidst the flowers when I awoke. It took me ever so long to realize that I was in my own bed and had not gone on that beautiful journey."

"I hope the journey has made you hungry," he lightly said. "Breakfast must be waiting."

Edith rose with a sigh; sighing after those charming flowers, she said. Mr. Baumgarten laughed.

"Old wives tell us that a morning dream comes true," she remarked gaily, as they went downstairs; "but I am sure this one never will. We do not take those long journeys in this world, or see flowers so brilliant."

That dream occurred on Friday morning. It was the last Friday in June. On the Tuesday morning following, Edith Baumgarten was lying in extreme peril—the doctors giving little hope of her life.

Mr. Baumgarten was sitting by her bedside, holding her hand in his; his tears were kept back, his voice was low with suppressed grief. "Do not say 'we have been happy,' my darling; say 'we are.' I cannot part with you; there is hope yet."

"There is none," she wailed—"there is none. Oh, Ryle, my husband, it will be a hard parting!"

She feebly drew his face to hers, and his tears fell upon it. "Edith, if I lose you, I shall lose all that is of value to me in life."

A tap at the door, and then a middle-aged woman, holding a very young infant in her arms, put in her head, and looked at Mr. Baumgarten. "The doctors are coming up, sir."

He lingered an instant after the medical men entered the chamber, but he gathered nothing, and could not ask questions there; so he left it and went downstairs. There, his face pressed against the window, he stood, thinking how unkind fate was to him.

On Sunday, Edith had seemed better than usual. When she left the church after morning service, she glanced up at the old clock, saw that it wanted twenty minutes to one, and that she should just have time to go to Miss Knightley's and ask after her, for they had not heard that morning.

She did not intend to go in; but hearing that the old lady was much better and sitting up, Edith, pressed by the servant, went up "just for a minute." The minute lengthened itself out, and as she left the house again, one o'clock struck.

"Dear me!" thought Edith, "I shall keep dinner and Ryle waiting. I must take the nearer way home."

The nearer way was the field way, and would shorten the distance by about two minutes. Edith came to the stile at the end of the field; haste made her careless, and in getting over it she fell rather heavily. It did not hurt her that she knew of: the doctors, when told of it, did not say so. Mr. Baumgarten heard them leave the sick-chamber, and turned from the window to receive them.

"Well?" he muttered, his tone fraught with pain.

"There is no improvement, sir; there can be none," said the stranger who had been called in, a very plain-speaking man. "If she could only have rallied —but she cannot. She will sink, we fear, from exhaustion."

"She may recover yet," was the sharp interruption, made in anguish; "I am sure she may. But a few days ago, well; and now——"

"Mr. Baumgarten," said Dr. Conway, "would it be right to deceive you—to give you hope where none exists? If we did, you would blame us afterwards. The sad truth is that she cannot be saved."

Mr. Brice, lingering behind the physician, laid his hand gently upon Mr. Baumgarten's arm, his voice and eyes alike full of pity.

"It must be God's will, my friend. Try to bear it."

Mr. Baumgarten only answered with a groan. "Cannot *you* give me hope, Brice?"

"Alas!" said the surgeon, "I have none to give."

And yet, later in the day, she did seem a little better: it was the rallying of the spirit before departure. She knew it was deceitful strength, but it put hope into the heart of Mr. Baumgarten.

"Ryle, if he should live, you will always be kind to him?"

"Edith! Kind to *him!* Oh, my wife, my wife,"

he uttered, with a burst of irrepressible emotion, "you must not go, and leave him and me."

She waited until he was calmer; she was far more collected than he.

"*You* will love him?" she reiterated faintly; "you will always protect him against the world's unkindness?"

"Ay; that I swear to you," he ardently replied. And Edith Baumgarten breathed a sigh of relief, and quietly lay back upon her pillow.

Her voice, hardly to be heard at all, was growing fainter and fainter. Her husband thought it must be the faintness attendant on death; but for a short time she seemed to sleep.

He sat on: his arm beneath her neck, his other hand held one of her hands. All was still; so still that the ticking of Edith's watch, lying on the dressing-table, was audible. About ten minutes had thus passed, when a slight cry from the infant in the next room, followed by the soothing hush of the nurse, fell upon Mr. Baumgarten's ear.

"Ryle! Ryle!"

"My dear?" he breathed, vexed that her sleep should have been disturbed.

"I have been in that dream again—going on my long, long journey," she said in disjointed syllables. "Oh, Ryle, I know it now: it is the journey of death."

"My dear wife!" he cried, much distressed.

"The air is—oh, so sweet—and the light at the far end so bright and lovely—and the flowers—look at the flowers!—they are the flowers of heaven!—and—and—oh, look! look!——"

The tone, growing inaudible, had taken a sound of ecstasy: and, with the last word, the spirit passed away.

When the inhabitants of Little Whitton rose up on Wednesday morning the church bell was tolling—proclaiming that poor Edith Baumgarten, daughter of their late pastor and wife of their present, had set out on the long last journey.

Whether it be death that disturbs a community, or whether it be birth or marriage, time goes on all the same. After the funeral of Mrs. Baumgarten, the parish flocked to Whitton Cottage, to condole with their Rector and to see the baby. He received them with quiet courtesy, but the most sanguine sympathizers could not detect any encouragement for a renewal of the visit. All that could make life pleasant to Mr. Baumgarten was as yet buried in the grave of Edith.

Gradually he began to take notice of the child; at first he had avoided him. The old servant, Dinah, who had lived with the Danes for years, took charge

of him. Mr. Baumgarten would sometimes have him on his knee now, and soon loved him with an impassioned fondness. He had nothing else to love.

Following close upon Edith's death, a distant relative bequeathed a few hundred pounds to Mr. Baumgarten. The money came to him quite unexpectedly, and he decided to use it in putting the Rectory into habitable repair. This was done; and he moved into it with his two servants, Ann and Dinah, both of them elderly women.

Thus the months glided on to winter: the Rector fulfilling all his duties as of yore, but leading a very lonely life. He was a sociable man by nature and full of ambition; but for him social ties seemed to be at an end, and his position offered no prospect whatever of change or advancement. So far as the present look-out went, he might expect to live and die at Little Whitton.

One bright frosty day in January, when the icicles shone in the sun and the blue sky was cloudless, the open carriage of Lady Avon drew up at the Rectory gate, just as the reader once saw it stop at that of Whitton Cottage; but it had only one occupant now, and that was herself. After the marriage of Mr. Baumgarten, Lady Avon had occasionally attended Little Whitton Church as heretofore, but Lady Grace never. She had always excuses ready, and her mother

—who had never fathomed, or even suspected, the true cause of Grace's caprice as to the living—put faith in them. The countess declined to alight, and Mr. Baumgarten went out to the gate.

"Would it be troubling you very much, Mr. Baumgarten, to come to Avon House occasionally and pass an hour with me?" began she, as they shook hands.

"Certainly not, if you wish it," he replied. "If I can render you any service, I shall be very happy to come."

Lady Avon lowered her voice, and bent towards him. "I am not happy in my mind, Mr. Baumgarten; not easy. The present world is passing away from me, and I know little of the one I am entering. I don't like the Rector of Great Whitton, he does not suit me; but with you I feel at home. I shall be obliged to you to come up once or twice a-week and pass a quiet hour with me."

"I will do so. But I hope you find nothing more than usual the matter with your health."

"Time will prove," replied Lady Avon. "How is your little boy?"

"He gets on famously; he is a brave little fellow," returned Mr. Baumgarten, his eyes brightening. "Would you like to see him? I will have him brought out."

"I should like to see him, yes; but I will come in."

He helped her from the low carriage, and gave her his arm up the path, and the most comfortable chair by the parlour fire. The child was brought in by Dinah—a pretty babe in a white frock and black ribbons, the latter worn in memory of his mother.

Lady Avon took him on her knee.

"He will resemble you," she said, scanning his face; "he has your eyes exactly, deep and dark"—and she had nearly added "beautiful." The child put his hand upon her ermine boa.

"My pretty boy!" she exclaimed fondly. "What is his name?"

"Cyras. I know it would have pleased Edith to have him named after her father."

"Ah! Poor Edith!" sighed Lady Avon, as she gave the child back to Dinah and rose. "Not the least distressing feature of that loss was its suddenness. I wished I could have come over to say farewell."

Mr. Baumgarten sighed in answer, as he again gave his arm to Lady Avon. "By the way," she said, as he was settling her in the carriage, "I must congratulate you upon getting into the Rectory. You paid the cost of the repairs yourself, I believe?"

"Yes. I had some money left me unexpectedly, and used it for the purpose."

"From your father?"

"Oh no; from a very distant relative—Colonel

Baumgarten. My father has been dead several years. He was a clergyman: one of the Kentish rectors."

"Well, I am glad you are in it. Good-day."

"Good-day, Lady Avon. Home, James," he added to the postillion.

Mr. Baumgarten paid his first visit to Avon House on the following day. Lady Grace was alone in the room when he entered, and it happened that she knew nothing of his expected visit. It startled her to emotion. However she may have striven to drive away the remembrance of Ryle Baumgarten, she had not done it; and her feelings of anger, her constantly indulged feelings of jealousy, had only helped to keep up her passion. Her countenance flushed crimson, and then grew deadly pale.

Mr. Baumgarten took her hand, almost in compassion; he thought she must be ill. "What has been the matter?" he inquired.

"The matter! Nothing," and she grew crimson again. "Is your visit to mamma? Do you wish to see her?"

"I am here by appointment with Lady Avon."

The countess came into the room, and Grace found that his visits were to be frequent.

Did she rebel, or did she rejoice? Oh, reader, if you have loved as she did, passionately, powerfully, you need not ask. The very presence of one so beloved is

as the morning light; at his coming, it is as if sunshine burst upon a night of darkness. So had Grace Carmel felt when with Mr. Baumgarten in the time gone by; so did she feel again now, although he had belonged to another.

From that day they saw a great deal of each other, and in the quiet intercourse of social life—of invalid life, it may be said, for Lady Avon's ill-health was confirmed—grew more intimate than they had ever been. Lady Grace strove to arm herself against him: she called up pride, anger, and many other adjuncts, false as they were vain, for the heart is ever true to itself, and will be heard. It ended in her struggling no longer: in her giving herself up, once more, to the bliss of loving him unchecked.

Did he give himself up to the same, by way of reciprocity? Not of loving her—no, it had not come to that; but he did yield to the charm of liking her, of finding pleasure in her society, of wishing to be more frequently at Avon House. He had loved his wife, but she was dead and buried: and there are very few men indeed who remain constant in heart to a dead love, especially if she has been his wife. The manners of Grace possessed naturally great fascination: what then must they not have been when in intercourse with one she idolized? She was more quiet than formerly, more confidential, more subdued; it was a

change as if she had gone through sorrow, and precisely what was likely to tell upon the heart of Ryle Baumgarten. But there was no acting now in Lady Grace; she was not striving to gain him, as she had once done—she simply gave herself up to the sweet dream she was indulging, and let results take their chance. Mr. Baumgarten may be forgiven if he also began to feel that existence might yet be made into something pleasant as a dream. Thus the time passed on to May.

The Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen, claiming a dead earl for a father and a live earl for a brother, was not, of course, a light whose beams could be hid under a bushel, more particularly as the live earl was in the Cabinet. It therefore surprised no one that when the excellent old Bishop of Barkaway was gathered to his fathers, and a lucky canon who held one of the best livings in the kingdom was promoted to his mitre, Mr. Elliotsen should step into the canon's shoes, rich living and all. This left Great Whitton vacant. As luck, or the opposite, chanced to have it, Lord Avon was on a few days' visit to his mother when Mr. Elliotsen received his appointment.

"Don't put such another as Elliotsen into Great Whitton, Henry," observed the countess to her son, "or we shall have the parish in rebellion."

"He has not succeeded in pleasing his flock yet, then?" remarked his lordship.

"No. They have put up with him because they had to do it; they could not help themselves. On fine days many of them have gone over to Little Whitton. There is no help for these cases, you see, Henry; sometimes it strikes me as being very like a wrong which the Church ought to rectify. I suppose you think me shamefully unorthodox for saying so.'

"Indeed I don't, mother; I like people to enjoy their own opinions, and I'm not sure that I don't think with you. If I had any decided views as to what church I went to, or what parson I sat under—which I've not at present," added the earl, with a cough—"I might not be pleased if a man holding adverse and unwelcome notions were thrust upon me. We must consider the Scotch ways preferable, I take it: they elect their own pastor, I believe."

"After a trial of his preaching," assented Lady Avon.

"And our plan is no end of bother to the patron when a good living falls in," continued the young man. "Seventeen letters I have had this blessed morning, applications, direct or indirect, for Great Whitton. I have half a mind to reply through the *Times*, and make one answer do for all."

Lady Avon raised herself from her sofa and looked at her son. "Do you want a candidate, Henry?"

He looked at her. "Scarcely, mother, with seventeen bold applications, and seventy more behind them, peeping out."

"Henry, if you have no one especially in view, let me name the Rector *this* time. It will perhaps be one of my last requests to you."

"I'm sure I don't much care, mother. I had heart-burning enough over it last time, every man but the successful one thinking himself ill-used. If your mind's set upon any fellow I'll give it him at once, glad to do it, and send off a stereotyped answer to my correspondents: 'Very sorry; living's given; wish I had heard of your excellent merits earlier.'"

"Then give it to Mr. Baumgarten. He is a deserving man, Henry; he will restore peace to the parish; and as a preacher few excel him."

Lord Avon laughed a little as he sat down to face the sofa.

"Why, mother, Baumgarten is the very man I had in my own mind. I thought by your preamble you must have fixed on some one else. I would rather he had it than any other parson in the world. I can tell you that the smart the last *contretemps* brought me lingers yet. Let it be Baumgarten: we owe him a recompense."

And that very day the earl, afraid, possibly, of fresh interference, personally offered Great Whitton

to Mr. Baumgarten, and shook hands on its acceptance.

The news was soon made known. Great Whitton, with its nine hundred a-year and its handsome Rectory, was presented to the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten. The churchwardens threw up their hats, and looked in at the school-house to tell the mistress that the girls might unsew those white symbols from the back tails of their cloaks. That same evening Mr. Baumgarten presented himself at Avon House. Grace Carmel was standing amidst the rose-trees: she liked to linger in the open air at the dusk hour, to watch the stars come out, and to think of *him*. But that she wore a white dress, he might not have distinguished her in the fading twilight. He left the open path to join her.

"It is a late visit, Lady Grace, which I must apologize for; I was called out to a sick friend as I was starting, and detained an hour," he said; "but I could not resist coming to say a word of gratitude to Lord Avon. He did not allow time for it this morning when he called upon me; went away the moment he told me I was to have the living, as if he wished to avoid my thanks."

He felt the hand he had taken in greeting tremble within his, and he saw her raise her other hand hastily and lay it on her bosom, as if she would still its beating. She answered him with a smile.

"Your visit will not accomplish its object, Mr. Baumgarten, for my brother is gone. He left before dinner upon some matter of urgent business in town. Mamma says she is very glad that you will be nearer to us."

"Perhaps I have to thank you for this, as much as Lord Avon," he said.

"No; no, indeed: it was mamma who spoke to Henry, or he to her; they arranged it between them. I—I——"

"What?" he whispered.

"I did not speak to him," she continued, filling up the pause of hesitation. "That is all I was going to say."

But Mr. Baumgarten could not fail to detect how agitated she was, and as he stood there, looking at her downcast face in the twilight, the remembrance of certain words of his wife's came rushing over him, and he felt a sudden conviction that Lady Grace *had* loved him—and that she loved him still. He forgot what had been; he forgot the one who had been once his idol; and he yielded himself unreservedly to the fascination which had of late been stealing over his spirit.

Her trembling hands were busy with the rose-trees, though she could scarcely distinguish buds from leaves. Mr. Baumgarten took one hand, and placing it within

his own arm, bent down his face until it was on a level with hers. "Grace," he whispered, "have we misunderstood each other?"

She could not speak, but her lips turned white with her emotion. It was the hour of bliss she had so long dreamt of.

"Grace," he continued, in tones of impassioned tenderness, "have we loved each other through the past, and did I mistake my feelings? Oh, Grace, my best-beloved, forgive me! Forgive my folly and my blindness!"

With a plaintive cry of satisfied yearning, such as may escape from one who suddenly finds a long-sought-for resting-place, Grace Carmel turned to his embrace. He held her to him; he covered her face with his impassioned kisses, as he had once covered Edith Dane's; he whispered all that man can whisper of poetry and tenderness. She was silent from excess of bliss, but she felt that she could have lain where she was for ever.

"You do not speak," he jealously said; "you do not tell me that you forgive the past. Grace, say but one word; say you love me!"

"Far deeper than another ever did," she murmured. "Oh, Ryle! I will be more to you than she can have been!"

Recollection, prudence—perhaps for her sake—

began to dawn over Mr. Baumgarten; he smoothed the signs of emotion from his brow, he would have put her away.

"Grace, pardon my folly," he implored. "I am doing wrong; I have forgotten myself strangely. Forgive, forgive me! It is madness to aspire to you. I have no right to seek to drag you down from your rank to my level."

But she clung to him still. "Your own wife, your own dear wife," she whispered. "Ryle! Ryle! only love me for ever."

It is a fact—and the longer we live the more surely it must impress itself upon us—that uninterested spectators see more of what goes on around us than we see ourselves. Never had Lady Avon seen or suspected aught of the case regarding her daughter and Mr. Baumgarten.

The revelation came upon her with a blow. It was Grace who, calling up her courage, imparted it. Lady Avon went into a storm of anger; and then, finding her commands and reproaches produced no impression upon Grace for good, wrote in haste for Lord Avon.

An awful thing had happened, and he must come without a moment's delay, was what she curtly wrote; and the word "awful," be it understood, was in those days used only in its extreme sense, not, as

at present, in ridiculous lightness. Lord Avon obeyed, swearing a little at the contrariness of mundane affairs. His urgent business in town was that of witnessing the first appearance of a new singer at the opera, and this mandate stopped it.

"Ah," remarked Lord Avon, as he sat listening to his mother's tale, "I can now understand that past capricious trick Grace played. She must even then have been in love with Baumgarten."

"Yes," said Lady Avon, angrily; "and she must have found out that he was going to marry Edith Dane. We cannot allow it to go on, Henry."

His lordship twirled his light brown whiskers; rather a habit of his when in a puzzle.

"I don't see how we can stop it," he presently said.

"But it must be stopped."

"How will you do that, mother?"

"*You* must do it. You are the head of the family."

Lord Avon laughed lightly. "Grace has always wound me round her little finger. Why, mother, I have no authority over her whatever; if I attempted to exercise any she would simply set me at defiance."

Lady Avon had no whiskers to twirl, but she pulled at her cap-strings. What her son said was true.

"Grace has had her own way ever since she could toddle, you know, mother; you and my father took

care of that. *I* didn't get it half as much. My opinion is, she will take it now. She is her own mistress, and she has her own fortune—what little it is."

"She cannot marry without your consent; your father made that proviso in his will, remember."

"Yes she can, mother. Before she was of age she could not do so; she can now."

Lady Avon sat in bitter mortification. "What is to be done?" she asked.

"The best plan, so far as I can see, will be to put a good face upon it, and let her have him."

"Nonsense, Henry!"

"It is not so bad as it might have been," went on the earl. "Baumgarten is a gentlemanly fellow, and of fairly good descent. You like him much, I believe."

"Good gracious!" retorted Lady Avon. "It is one thing to like a man as a clergyman, and quite another thing to like him as a husband for one's daughter. How absurd you are, Henry!"

"Look here, mother mine: if you can point out any feasible way of putting a stop to the affair, I'll try to do it. *I* don't see any."

"Why, he is a widower! He has a child!"

"Grace knows that. He is uncommonly good-looking."

Lady Avon's face was full of distressed perplexity.

"Last autumn Lord Chrisley came here with proposals of marriage to her, and she refused him. In spite of all I could say, she refused him absolutely."

"Had got Baumgarten in her head, I expect," said the earl, carelessly. "Chrisley's a good fellow; I should like him to have had Grace."

"Can't you talk to her?"

"I will talk to her—if she'll let me," assented Lord Avon. "It will do no good; rely upon that, mother. If Grace has made her mind up to have Baumgarten, Baumgarten she'll have. And I do think that the pleasantest plan we can pursue will be to sanction it."

"Do you approve of him for your brother-in-law, pray?"

"No. Not altogether. My sister and your daughter ought to have made a very different match. But you know what Grace is, mother, and circumstances alter cases."

It was the plan pursued. It was the only pleasant plan, as Lord Avon had put it, that could be pursued. For Lady Grace held to her own will, and opposition would only have created scandal. And the ears of Great Whitton were regaled with the astounding news that their new and popular Rector was on the eve of marriage with that beautiful and haughty girl who had latterly lived amidst them, the daughter of the Countess of Avon.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LADS.

It was a long red-brick house, large and handsome, as many of these country rectories are; and on the spacious front lawn, one glorious morning at the end of June, might be seen the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten, his wife and children. Lady Grace sat on a bench under the shade of the lime-trees; the Rector stood by, talking with her. Two little boys were running about chasing a yellow butterfly. They were dressed alike, after the fashion of the day, in brown holland blouses, white frilled drawers which came just below the knee, white socks, shoes, and broad-brimmed straw hats.

"You keep still, Charley," cried the elder one, a bold, beautiful child of five years; "you only frighten him, dodging in his way like that."

"Me want to tatch him, Cy'as," said the little one, who was just turned three, and did not speak plainly; "me a'most dot him."

"I'm going to catch him for you," said the other, imperiously. "You go back to mamma."

"Let him stay where he is; he can run after the butterfly if he chooses, as well as you, Master Cyras," interposed a nursemaid who was walking about, carrying a baby in white.

"It's nothing to you, Jaquet—you hold your tongue," retorted Cyras, for between him and Jaquet there was no love lost, especially Jaquet, as the Americans say.

A clever movement of his hat captured the unfortunate butterfly. "I've got him, Charley!" shouted Cyras in triumph, and the boys sat down together on the grass.

They were wonderfully alike, these two little half-brothers, each possessing his father's face in miniature; the same pale, healthy complexion, the fine, clear-cut features, the dark eyes so deeply set within their long lashes, and the wavy brown hair soft as silk. But in disposition they were quite different. Cyras was bold, self-willed, masterful; Charles gentle, pliant and timid. Cyras was tall and strong, and forward beyond his years; the younger one was yielding, childish and backward. Already Cyras constituted himself his brother's protector, and Charles in his hands was as a tender reed. The affection between them was great, rather unusually so.

When Lady Grace married she had brought Jaquet with her, one of the housemaids from Avon House, to be upper housemaid at the Rectory and to wait upon herself. Dinah also came to it in charge of little Cyras. Just as Lady Grace's first child, Charles, was born, old Dinah was seized with permanent illness, and Jaquet became nurse to both children. Jaquet was good and faithful on the whole, but she had her tempers and her prejudices. She learned to love the infant with ardour, but she learned to dislike Cyras. This arose partly from the fact that she had not herself nursed him from the first, and partly because Cyras, even when very little, would set her at defiance in refusing to give in to her whims.

Some people had prophesied that Lady Grace would repent her imprudent marriage. They proved to be wrong. Grace was intensely happy in it. To live quietly at a secluded country rectory upon fourteen hundred a-year was very different from the pomp which she had enjoyed as an earl's daughter, but Grace seemed to have found her vocation in this unpretending life. Grace had brought with her only five hundred a-year to augment Mr. Baumgarten's means; it was all she would enjoy until Lady Avon's death. She made a fairly kind stepmother to the little Cyras, but she had not the same affection for him as for Charles. That goes, as the French say,

without telling. Her baby, now in Jaquet's arms, was a fair girl, the little Gertrude.

"Well, Grace, what am I to say?" asked Mr. Baumgarten.

Lady Grace did not answer at once; she appeared to be considering. It was some question of a visit they were discussing.

"Ryle," she said, raising her beautiful face to look at him, "I would rather not go. I do not like that man."

"So be it," he answered; "I would rather stay at home myself. But why don't you like him, Grace? Most people find him charming."

"I can't tell why. I *don't*, and that's all I am able to say about it."

"A case of Dr. Fell," returned the Rector with semi-gravity; and Lady Grace laughed.

"Yes, that's it, I suppose. My private opinion is that his own wife does not like him."

"I say, Grace, don't talk treason. The birds in the trees up there might carry it to the parish crier."

"I'll tell you one thing I saw, Ryle, the last time we were there: I've never mentioned it even to you," she resumed, lowering her voice in deference to the subject or to the birds of the air. "It was the evening before we came away. After I had dressed for dinner I went to her room-door and knocked, calling out to

ask whether she was ready to go down. She opened it herself very quickly; her face looked confused, and there was a red mark on the left cheek, as if she had just had a blow, and tears were in her eyes. She only drew the door open an inch or two, but I saw——"

Lady Grace broke off at the sound of wheels and did not finish her story. The large, low, open carriage, which the reader has seen before, driven by its liveried postillion, was stopping at the gate. Mr. Baumgarten hastened to assist Lady Avon from it and give her his arm.

She walked slowly to the bench where her daughter was sitting. She was just the same invalid as ever, had been so all these years; but she did not seem to grow much worse. The boys ran up to her.

"Me dot a butterfly, grandma," said the little one, exhibiting his treasure. "Cy'as dot it for me."

"Grandmamma, it is my birthday," said Cyras, who had been allowed so to call the countess. "Papa gave me a new book with pictures, and mamma gave me a box of sweets. Shall you give me anything?"

"I must consider what I have to give," said Lady Avon smiling, as she kissed them both. "Let me see, is it five years old you are to-day, Cyras?"

"Yes, I'm five," answered the young man. "I shall be a great big boy next year; big enough to go to school, Jaquet says."

Jaquet, who had drawn near with the baby, knitted her brows and made all the dumb signs to the boy she dare make, as an injunction to hold his tongue; her lady was not one to permit gratuitous suggestions. The countess held out her arms for the baby.

"The boys are like their father, Grace," she observed, looking down at the infant; "but Gertrude is like you."

"Yes," assented Grace, with a laugh. "Well, mamma, that is just as it should be, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is, my dear. Which of you little boys will go for a drive with me? It must be you, Cyras, I think, as it is your birthday."

"Oh yes, yes!" cried the boy eagerly; "I will go. Jaquet, fetch my best hat."

"Me too," added little Charley.

"No, I cannot manage both of you," said Lady Avon. "You shall go another day, Charley; perhaps to-morrow."

"My hat, Jaquet!" again said Cyras impatiently, for the girl had not stirred. Lady Grace looked at her.

"Do you hear?" she said, in her haughty way. "Master Cyras told you to fetch his hat. Bring his little cape as well."

Now this was just what Jaquet hated—for Cyras to order her about imperiously, and for her lady to confirm it.

"Ryle," said Lady Avon to her son-in-law, when Jaquet had gone for the things, "can you not do something or other to put down that fair?"

She spoke of a pleasure fair which was held every Midsummer on Whitton Common, and lasted for a week.

The Rector shook his head in answer. "Why, no; how could I, Lady Avon?"

"You have great influence in the parish. Every one looks up to you."

"But I have none over the fair. No one has. It possesses 'vested interests,' you know," added Mr. Baumgarten, laughing, "and they are too strong to be interfered with. I try to induce my people to keep away from it; that is all I can do."

"It is a very annoying thing," said Lady Avon. "Every year that Midsummer Fair sets itself up amidst us for a whole week, and works no end of ill in demoralizing people. Robert went off to it last night, and got home, Charity tells me, at one o'clock this morning, not sober. I spoke to him just now, asking him if he did not feel ashamed of himself, and he had the face to tell me he was perfectly sober, but that the merry-go-round, which he unfortunately went into, turned his head giddy."

The Rector bit his lips. Lady Grace burst into a laugh. "Mamma," she said, "do you remember how

I used to like to go to that fair on the children's day, as it is called, when we first came down here? They had a theatre on the ground one year, and I made mademoiselle take me in to see the performance; and there was always an elephant in another show, and oceans of delicious cakes and gingerbread nuts."

"I'm going to the fair to-morrow," put in Cyras.

"Me too," said Charley.

"Certainly not," austerely spoke Lady Avon. "Ryle, you surely will not so far countenance the thing as to allow your children to go!"

"Well, I—hardly know," replied Mr. Baumgarten with hesitation. "All the children in the parish will be there to-morrow."

"But not yours. It would be a direct encouragement of evil for the children of the Rector to be seen there. You and Grace know I never interfere with your management, but I really must do so in this one matter. The boys must not go to the fair."

"Don't put yourself out, mother," said Lady Grace equably; "they shall not go, as you make a point of it."

"I want to go, mamma," cried Cyras, sturdily. "Me and Charley are to go."

"Be quiet, Cyras. You hear what grandmamma says. The fair is a naughty place, not good for little boys."

"The fair is not a naughty place," disputed Cyras,

looking his stepmother undauntedly in the face while maintaining his opinion. "There's swings there, and drums and whistles."

"I will have some drums and whistles bought for you, my dear, and bring them here, and some for Charley," said Lady Avon. "And here comes your hat, Cyras; and we must be going, or we shall have time for only a short drive."

Jaquet put on the child's hat and cape. Grace took the baby from her mother, and Mr. Baumgarten escorted Lady Avon to the carriage.

"Be a good boy, Cyras; don't be troublesome to your grandmamma," enjoined the Rector, as he placed the lad beside Lady Avon.

Cyras could be very good indeed when he pleased, quite an intelligent little companion, and he always was so when with Lady Avon. Without being in the least harsh in her manner to children, but ever kind and firm, Lady Avon was one of those women who seem to obtain obedience without palpably exacting it. The only child she had ever been too indulgent to, and *not* firm with, was her daughter Grace. Cyras talked to his grandmamma as they went along, sometimes standing up—when Lady Avon held him fast by his blouse—to talk to the postillion about the pretty horses and the harness, and what not. Cyras was always sociable.

"Where are we going, grandmamma?" asked he, as they turned into a green lane, which led to a cross-country road in the opposite direction to the fair, near which Lady Avon would not have gone had she been bribed to do so. "It is very pretty this way; perhaps we shall see some haymakers."

Cyras was quite satisfied; all roads were pretty much alike to him. They saw some haymakers, and they saw some gipsies.

In returning home, when driving across a strip of waste land or common, an open carriage containing an old lady encountered that of Lady Avon. Both carriages stopped, and the ladies entered into conversation. It chanced that they had stopped exactly opposite a gipsy encampment, the sight of which gave Cyras unbounded delight. He had never seen one before; or, if he had, had forgotten it.

The fires on the short grass; the kettles swung above them; the tent behind; the children running about, and the dark, sunburnt women looking up with smiling faces, had a wonderful attraction for Cyras. He wished he might get out and run to them; but just as he was wishing it the carriages parted to move on.

"Grandmamma, look! Do look. Isn't it nice?"

Lady Avon turned to Cyras's side of the carriage and saw the settlement; she had not before observed

it. "Dear me," said she, "a gipsy encampment! I wonder they are not at the fair. The men are, I suppose; I see none about."

"What is it, grandmamma?"

"A gipsy camp, my dear. They are people who rove about the country, and sleep in the open air at night, or in caravans."

"I wish I could. Do you see the fires, grandmamma? Couldn't we go to them?"

"Oh dear, no," said Lady Avon, very decisively. "Little boys must never go near such people."

The carriage deposited Cyras at the Rectory-gate as the clocks were striking one. Lady Avon watched him enter, and then drove on. Charley came running out of doors to meet his brother.

"Oh, Charley, I wish you'd been with us!" began Cyras. "We've seen something beautiful."

"What is it?" asked Charles. "Jam?"

"It was gipsies. They had fires all blazing on the ground—on the grass, you know; and there was a big round thing you couldn't see inside of. I think there was a rocking-horse in it," added Cyras thoughtfully.

"Take me to see it, Cy'as! Please take me! Jaquet——"

The child's words were cut short by Jaquet herself, who came to hasten them in to their dinner.

The little boys dined at the luncheon-table That

day it happened that a clergyman from a distance was present at the meal. He and Mr. Baumgarten went into very deep converse about some public church matters which were not giving satisfaction. Lady Grace joined in it; thus Cyras found no opportunity to tell of his experiences touching the gipsy camp, as he would otherwise have done. The children were trained on the good old-fashioned plan—not to interrupt the conversation of their seniors, or to speak at all if strangers were present, unless spoken to. It would be well if the same training held sway at the present day.

Luncheon over, Mr. Baumgarten went out at once with his friend. Lady Grace proceeded to the nursery, and the boys ran to their swing at the back of the house.

About three o'clock Lady Alwyn and her sister drove up. They came from a distance, and generally stayed an hour or two with Lady Grace, with whom they were intimate, the carriage being put up for the time. The days of afternoon-tea had not then come in; people would as soon have thought of offering broth as tea before dinner; but wine and cake, the usual refreshment, were rung for by Lady Grace, which the man-servant, Moore, took in.

About four o'clock Jaquet went to see after the boys. Her mistress had said they had gone to the

swing. Jaquet could not see them anywhere, and ran round to the front lawn. They were not there.

"Do you know where the children are, Moore?" she inquired, meeting the man in the hall.

"No, unless they're with my lady in the drawing-room; they were there when I took in the wine and cake," answered Moore. He was a son of the clerk at Great Whitton Church, and had lived with Mr. Baumgarten and Lady Grace since they first came to the Rectory, the only indoor man-servant.

"Oh, then they are sure to be there; trust them for stopping where there's any cake going on," said Jaquet. And she went back to her nursery and to the baby, then just waking up out of sleep.

It was five o'clock when the carriage was brought round and the guests went away. Lady Grace ran up to the nursery. A maid was carrying in the tray containing the children's tea and Jaquet's.

"Where are they?" asked Lady Grace, looking round.

"Where's who, my lady?" returned the nurse.

"The children."

"They have not been up here," said Jaquet. "I thought they were with your ladyship."

"They must be at the swing," said Lady Grace.

But the children were not at the swing; they were not in the front garden; they did not seem to be

anywhere. Lady Grace began to feel somewhat uneasy. She went outside the gate and looked down the avenue which led to the high-road; still she did not think they would run off of their own accord; even Cyras had never done that.

Moore, Jaquet, and one of the housemaids went about, searching the house and grounds thoroughly; all in vain. In the midst of the commotion Mr. Baumgarten came home.

"Why, what's the matter?" he exclaimed, seeing the assembled searchers at the gate with excited faces.

"The children are lost," said Lady Grace.

"Lost! The children! Oh, nonsense," said Mr. Baumgarten.

It appeared that the last seen of them was when Moore took the wine and cake to the drawing-room. Lady Grace was not very clear as to how soon afterwards they left it; she thought immediately; but she was quite sure they came into it only a minute or two before Moore. They did not have any cake; did not wait until it was cut.

"What time was it?" asked Mr. Baumgarten.

It wanted about a quarter to four, Moore thought, when he took the tray in.

At this moment a youth, who had been taken on that week to assist the gardener in bedding out some

plants, approached from the side of the lawn, touching his cap to the Rector, and looking as if he wanted to speak.

"What is it, James?"

"I beg pardon, sir; I saw the two little gentlemen go through the gate this afternoon. It was a little afore four o'clock. They ran as fast as they could down the avenue, their little legs did, as if afraid of being overtook. Master Cyras held the little one by the hand."

"Why did you not stop them?" demanded the Rector—which caused James to open wide his eyes.

"Me, sir! I shouldn't make bold to stop 'em, sir, without being telled to."

"They have gone off to the fair," said Mr. Baumgarten to his wife. "I suppose this comes of our having promised your mother in their hearing that they should not go to it."

"Then it's Cyras who is in fault," said she. "Charles would not have the sense to do such a thing, or the courage either."

"Of course not. He is too young for that yet awhile."

"Will they come to harm, think you, Ryle?"

"Young monkeys!" he cried, half laughing, as he walked away with a quick step in pursuit. "Harm,

no; don't worry yourself, Grace; I'll soon catch them up."

The fair was held on Whitton Common, on the other side of the village, and near to Little Whitton. There was also a way to it through fields and shady lanes, and Lady Grace bethought herself to despatch Moore by that route, though it was hardly likely the children had taken it.

In any kind of suspense time seems to move on leaden wings. When an hour had elapsed and did not bring the truants, Lady Grace grew very uneasy. In her restlessness she put on her bonnet and went down the avenue to where the high-road crossed it, and stood there looking out. All the stragglers passing by were going towards the fair; none coming from it. Not one.

"Of course not!" she impatiently cried. "It is just the time when the workpeople are flocking to it," and she turned back home. This little excursion she repeated twice or thrice.

About half-past six, standing again in the road, she saw Mr. Baumgarten hastening back. But he was not leading a child in each hand, as she had fondly pictured; he was alone.

"I cannot see or hear anything of them," he said, in answer to his wife's impulsive question. "I don't think they can have gone to the fair."

"But where else would they be likely to go, Ryle?"

"Boyd has been sitting in his garden all the afternoon, in full view of the road; had his tea brought out to him there," continued Mr. Baumgarten, alluding to his curate, who had been disabled the past week or two, through an accident to his foot. "He says he could not have failed to see the little ones had they appeared; and he has been watching the passers-by to the fair by way of amusement."

"Did you go on to the fair, Ryle, and look about in it? Did you inquire of the people?"

"Why, of course I did, Grace. I searched all over it, in the booths and out of them. Only a sprinkling of people had collected; it was too early. I inquired of nearly every one, I think, describing the boys; but they had not been seen."

Just within the avenue leading to the house there stood a bench, placed there by Mr. Chester, the late Rector, for the accommodation of wayfarers. Mr. Baumgarten, who was hot and tired, sat down on it.

"You had better come in and have some dinner, Ryle."

"Not now; I must be off again."

"But where can you go now?" she asked, taking a seat beside him.

"I don't know where; somewhere or other. I can't rest in this uncertainty."

"Did you see Moore? I sent him after you, the field way."

"I saw him on the common. He had not come across the young ones."

Two or three minutes longer they sat. Mr. Baumgarten was utterly fatigued and quite at a loss to decide which way would be the best next to start upon. Grace shivered inwardly, picturing the harm that would come, or had come, to Charley.

"Do you think they have been kidnapped, Ryle? Both are beautiful boys."

"No, no," said Mr. Baumgarten.

By degrees they became aware that sundry people were speeding along the highway one after another, not towards the fair, but in the other direction. "Where can they be going?" cried Grace. "Has anything happened?" she inquired, running to arrest one of them—a working-man from a cottage hard by.

"It's reported there has just been a great landslip in that cutting they were making for the railway, my lady, and some people are buried under it," answered the man. "One boy's killed."

Lady Grace cried out in terror. "Oh, Ryle, Ryle, do you hear?" she moaned. "*That's* where the children are gone. The other day, when I had them out with me, I could hardly get them past it. They wanted to go down into the cutting."

Mr. Baumgarten turned very pale. "Hush, my dear," he said in low tender tones, "we must hope for the best. I will—here comes Brice!"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is a serious accident," began the doctor, in answer to their emotional faces. "A fellow has just run over to tell me. *What* do you say? What? The children there! Bless my heart!"

"Go indoors, my love; keep yourself as tranquil as you can whilst I go on with Brice," whispered Mr. Baumgarten to his agitated wife.

Indoors! In that suspense? No! Lady Grace could not be tranquil enough for that. She paced about the avenue, and sat down on the bench, and stood in the highway watching the runners speeding to the scene; all by fits and starts. Twilight was coming on when she saw her husband returning. Mr. Brice was with him.

The landslip had not been so bad as reported. Landslips and other mishaps rarely are. Two men only were injured, and the boy spoken of; none of them mortally, and Mr. Brice had attended to them. No trace had been found there of the children.

"I'm sure I don't know where to look now," said Mr. Baumgarten, his voice betraying his weariness. "Grace, I believe I must snatch some refreshment before I go out again."

She put her arm within his at once and led him

down the avenue. "Are you coming too, Mr. Brice?" she said, holding out her hand. "That's right. I'm sure you must need something"

Tea was brought in, and some hastily-cut sandwiches. In ten minutes they were out of doors again.

"They are at the fair, those young rebels, rely upon that," spoke Mr. Brice, purposely making light of the matter. "You must have missed them, Baumgarten."

"I think so too," added Lady Grace. "I think you should go there again, Rye."

Just as she was speaking, and they were walking slowly down the path, the gate opened and a group came in. A tall man, with flashing black eyes and a yellow skin, evidently a gipsy, and—the two boys. He was carrying Charley in his arms. Cyras trotted beside him.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried Charley And Grace Baumgarten wondered whether she had ever before given such heartfelt thanks to God.

Instead of advancing to meet the children and the man, Mr. Baumgarten suddenly sat down on a garden seat. The same curious sickness, or pain, or oppression—he hardly knew what it was—which had attacked him once or twice before, seized him now. Mr. Brice and Lady Grace were asking questions.

"Yes, master," said the man, addressing Mr. Brice, "when we got back to the women and children this

evening these two little gents was there with 'em round the fire; so I set off again and brought 'em home."

"How could you be so naughty, Cyras, as to run away?" cried Lady Grace.

"I wanted to show Charley the gipsy camp," replied Cyras.

"Were you not afraid, Charley, to go all that way?" she continued.

"Me not afraid with Cy'as," said the little one.

"I took care of Charley," put in Cyras, as if he had been a giant of strength.

Looking white and ill, Mr. Baumgarten came forward. The paroxysm had passed. He spoke a few heartfelt thanks to the man and rewarded him, and took him indoors that something to eat and drink might be given to him.

"I shall never speak against gipsies again," impulsively declared Lady Grace Baumgarten.

## CHAPTER VI.

### IN THE CATHEDRAL.

THE shades of twilight were fast gathering on the aisles of the old cathedral, and the congregation, assembled in the choir for afternoon service, began to wonder whether the chanter would be able to finish without a light. The beautiful colours of the painted east window were growing dim—exceedingly beautiful were they when the sun illumined them.

It was a full congregation, unusually numerous for a winter's afternoon, and one that threatened rain. The Bishop of Denham occupied his throne; the dean, a younger man and very handsome, sat in his stall. By his side was a boy of ten, or rather more; he possessed the dean's own face in miniature, and there could be no mistaking that they were father and son. Underneath the dean was the pew of his wife, and with her was another boy, somewhat younger, but bearing a great resemblance to the one by the dean. She was a fair, beautiful woman, with stately manners

and a haughty face; in age she may have been a year above thirty, though she did not look it.

Lord Avon, through influential friends, had taken care of his brother-in-law's preferment, and Ryle Baumgarten had been made Dean of Denham, and had taken his doctor's degree. He still retained the living of Great Whitton, as he was able to do, and he and Lady Grace spent part of the year at it. This afternoon he is presiding in his cathedral, and his wife, as already observed, sits beneath him. Cyras sits with the dean, Charles with his mother. Now they are all rising for the anthem.

The anthem was a short one this afternoon; it was soon over, and the congregation knelt again. Meanwhile the atmosphere had grown darker.

The chanter, an elderly man with a round face and bald head, bent his spectacles nearer and nearer to his book, and the dean, quietly pushing back the curtain beside his own stall, leaned down, whispered a word to one of the bedesmen who were congregated on the steps inside the choir entrance. The old man shuffled out, and presently shuffled in again with a flaring tallow candle, which he carried to the chanter's desk. The chanter gave him a nod for the unexpected accommodation, and went on more glibly. He had seen a light taken to the organ-loft before the commencement of the anthem.

The service concluded, the bishop gave the blessing, and the congregation left the choir, but they did not leave the edifice; they waited in the body of the cathedral to listen to the music, for the organist was treating them to some of the choicest morceaux amongst his voluntaries. He was an eminent player, and now and then chose to show them that he was so, and would keep them, delighted listeners, full half-an-hour after the conclusion of afternoon service; and sometimes he had to do so by order of the dean.

The bishop had little ear for music, but liked stopping in the cathedral, and the social chat it afforded, very well. He slowly paced the flagstones by the side of the dean's wife, the respectful crowd allowing them a wide berth; Dr. Baumgarten stood close to the railings of a fine monument, partly listening, partly talking, to the sub-dean. It was the month of November, the audit season, therefore all the great dignitaries of the cathedral were gathered in Denham.

"What's that now, Lady Grace?" asked the bishop. "It's something like Luther's Hymn; variations on it, possibly."

Lady Grace Baumgarten coughed down a laugh; but she knew the bishop's musical deficiencies. "It is from a symphony of Mozart's: your lordship does not listen."

"Mozart, eh? I can distinguish a tune well enough when they sing the words to it, and I know our familiar airs, 'God save the Queen,' and 'The Bluebells of Scotland,' and such like, but when it comes to these grand intricate pieces I am all at sea," spoke the bishop, in his honest simple-mindedness. "How are the children, Lady Grace?"

"Quite well, thank you. The two boys are here. I don't see them just now, but they are somewhere about."

Lady Grace could not see them, and for a very good reason—that they were not there. The eldest, an indulged boy and wilful, had scampered out to the cloisters the moment he could steal away from the paternal surplice, drawing his brother with him.

"Charley," quoth he, "it's come on to pour cats and dogs, and I promised Dynevor to go out with him after college. You go in and bring me my top-coat."

"Oh, Cyras, don't send me! Let me stop and listen to the organ."

"You stupid little monkey! Come, be off; or else you know what you'll get."

"But the music will be over, Cy," pleaded Charles, who was little and yielding and timid still, and completely under the dominion of masterful Cyras.

"The music be bothered! Here, take my Prayer-

book in with you. Such nonsense as it is of mamma, to make us bring our Prayer-books to college when there are the large books in the stalls, ready for use! Look you, Mr. Charles, I'll allow you three minutes to get back here with the coat, and if you exceed it by half a second you'll catch a tanning."

Master Baumgarten took out his watch—an appendage of which he was excessively proud—as he spoke; and Charley, knowing there was no appeal against his imperious brother, took the Prayer-book, and flew off through the covered passages which led into the Deanery from the cloisters.

Cyras amused himself with hissing and spitting at an unhappy cat, which had by some mischance got into the inclosed cloister graveyard; and, just before the time was up, back came the child, all breathless, the coat over his arm.

Cyras snatched it from him, thrust an arm into one of its sleeves, and was attempting to thrust the other, when he discovered that it did not belong to him. Charley had by mistake brought his own, and Cyras could not, by any dint of pushing, get into it. His temper rose; he struck the child a smart tap on the cheek, and then began to buffet him with the unlucky coat. But he took care not to hurt him. It was all show.

"You careless little beggar! What the bother did

you bring yours for? Haven't you got eyes? Haven't you got sense? Now, if——"

"Halloa! what's up? What's he been at now, Cy?"

The speaker was Frank Dynevor, Cyras Baumgarten's especial chum when he was at Denham. He was considerably older than Cyras, but the latter was a forward boy of his years, and would not acknowledge a companion in one of his own age.

"I sent him in for my coat, and he must bring his," explained Cyras. "A tanning would do him good."

"Of course it would," said Frank Dynevor. "What's he crying for?"

"For his sins," said Cyras.

The tears stood in Charley's eyes: nothing grieved him so much as for Cyras to be angry with him.

"He cries for nothing," went on Cyras, "and then they get him into the nursery and give him sugar-candy. Mamma and old Jaquet make a regular molly of him. Now, Master Charles, perhaps you'll go and get the right coat. It's his fault that I keep you waiting, Dynevor."

"I am not going," said Dynevor. "They began a row at home about my running out in the rain, so it's stopped, and I came to tell you. Here, Cy, come down this way."

The two boys, Dynevor's arm carelessly cast on

the shoulder of Cyras, strolled off together along the cloisters towards the obscure exit which led to the Dark Alley, Cyras having tossed the coat on Charley's head, nearly throwing him off his legs. Charley disencumbered himself, and espying some of the college boys, with whom he kept up a passing acquaintance when at Denham, he joined them. They were emerging noisily from the schoolroom, after taking off their surplices: music had no charms for them, so they had not remained amidst the listeners in the cathedral.

Now there was a charity school in Denham for the sons of poor parents, where plain learning was taught: the three R's, with a smattering of history and other matters. It was a large school, its numbers averaging four or five times those of the foundation school in the cathedral; and from time immemorial the gentlemen on the college foundation, called the king's scholars, and the boys of the charity school had been at daggers drawn. The slight pastimes of hard abuse and stone-throwing were indulged in whenever the opposition parties came into contact and circumstances permitted, but there occurred sometimes a more serious interlude —that of a general battle. Animosity at the present time ran unusually high, and, in consequence of some offence offered by the haughty college boys in the past week, the opposition boys (favoured possibly by the

unusual darkness of the afternoon) had ventured on the unheard-of exploit of collecting in a body round the cloister gate to waylay the king's scholars on their leaving the cathedral at the close of afternoon service. The latter walked into the trap and were caught; but they did not want for "pluck," and began laying about them right and left.

The noise penetrated to the other end of the cloisters, to the ears of the two lads parading there, and away they tore, eager to take part in any mischief that might have turned up. The first thing Cyras saw was his brother Charles struggling in the hands of some half-dozen of the enemy, and being roughly handled. Of course, having been with the college boys, he was taken for one of them; and being a meek little fellow, who stood aghast in the mêlée, instead of helping on the assault—besides looking remarkably aristocratic, a great crime in their eyes—he was singled out as being a particularly eligible target.

All the hot blood of Cyras Baumgarten's body rushed to his face and his temper: if *he* chose to put upon Charley and "tan" him, he was not going to see others do it. He flung off his jacket and his cap, threw them to Dynevor, and with his sturdy young fists doubled sprang upon the assailants. What a contrast, when you come to think of it! The stately, impassive dean, master of his cathedral, and standing

in it at the present moment, the cynosure of neighbouring eyes; the elegant Lady Grace with her rank and beauty, both of them particularly alive to the *convenances* of civilized life; and the two young Baumgartens, just beyond earshot, taking part in a juvenile fight, as fierce as any Irish row. Ah, good doctors of divinity, fair Lady Graces, *your* sons may be just as disreputably engaged behind your backs, little as you may suspect it, unworthy of belief as you would deem it.

What would have been the upshot it is impossible to say—broken noses certainly, if not broken legs—had not the master of the opposition boys come up: a worthy gentleman and martinet, whom the whole lot dreaded more than anything alive. He had scented, or been told of, the expedition, and had hastened to follow it, and bring down upon those fractious heads the weight of his wrathful authority. The very moment they caught sight of his portly figure off flew the crew in ignominious alarm, the college boys raising a derisive shout after them, and then decamping to their own homes. A good thing for them, and that the whole affair was over and done with before their masters came out of the cathedral.

Dynevor, who was hand-in-glove with some of the senior boys, returned Cyras's jacket and cap to him, and went away with his friends; and the two

Baumgartens were left alone. Charles was crying and shaking, Charles's nose was bleeding, and down sat Cyras in a corner of the now deserted cloisters, and held the child to him, as tenderly as any mother could have done.

"Don't cry, Charley dear," quoth he, kissing him fondly. "I know that biggest fellow that set upon you, and I'll pay him off as sure as he's a snob. I'd have paid them off now if they had waited, the cowards, and I don't care if they had killed me for it. Where did they hit you, Charley?"

"They hit me everywhere, Cyras," sobbed the child, who, though barely two years younger than his brother, was as a baby compared with him in hardihood and in knowledge of the world—if the remark may be applied to a young gentleman rising eleven. "Oh, how my nose bleeds!"

Cyras with his own white handkerchief kept wiping the suffering nose, kissing Charley between whiles.

"Charley dear," he began, between the latter's sobs, "if I hit you sometimes, it isn't that I want to hurt you, for I love you very much, better than anything in the world. You mustn't mind my hitting you; I'm used to hitting, and it'll teach you to be a man."

"Yes," breathed Charley, clinging closer to Cyras, whom, in spite of the latter's imperiousness, he dearly loved. "I know you don't do it to hurt me."

"No, that I don't. I don't hurt you ever—do I, Charley?"

"No, never," sobbed Charley. "It's only that I'm afraid you are angry with me."

"But I'm not," disclaimed Cyras. "There's not a soul in the house cares for you as I do, and I'll stand by you always, through thick and thin."

"Mamma cares for me, Cyras."

"After her fashion," returned Mr. Cyras. "She makes a girl of you, and pets you up to the skies. But I'll fight for you, Charley; I'll never let a hair of your head be touched when we go together to Eton or Rugby, whichever it's to be."

"I hope I shall get brave, like you, Cy. I think I shall, when I am as big as you: nurse says you were not much better than me when you were as little."

"Oh, I'm blest, though!" returned Cyras, not pleased with the remark. "*Who* says it?"

"Jaquet."

"Jaquet had better say that to me. She's a nice one! I never was a molly, Charley; I never had the chance to be; she knows that, and she must have said it just to humour you. Why now, only see what a girl they make of you; they keep you in these dandy velvet dresses with a white frill. And they don't let you stir out beyond the door, unless there's a

woman at your tail to see you don't fall, or don't get lost, or some such nonsense!"

Poor, unhappy, timid Charley caught up his sobbing breath.

"And then, look at mamma—taking you into her pew on Sunday! Never was such a spectacle seen before in Denham Cathedral, as for a chap of your age to sit in the ladies' seats. I'd rather be one of those snobs than I'd be made a molly of."

"Don't call me a molly, Cy," urged the child.

"It's not your fault," returned Cyras, kissing him still, "it's theirs. You have a brave heart, Charley, for you won't tell a lie, and you'll be brave yourself when they'll let you. I'll make you so. I'll teach you, and I'll love you better than all of them put together. Does your nose pain you now, Charley dear?"

"Not much. I was frightened."

A little while longer they sat there, Cyras soothing the still sobbing child, stroking his hair wiping his eyes, whispering endearing names; and then they got up, and Cyras led Charley affectionately into the Deanery, through the covered passage.

A couple of pretty objects they looked when they entered the well-lighted residence! Both their faces smeared with blood, as well as Charley's velvet dress and his "white frill," and Cyras's shirt-front; for the latter, in his caresses, had not escaped catching the

stains. The dean and Lady Grace had not entered, for all this had taken place in a very short space of time, and the organist was still playing. Cyras smuggled Charles into the nursery.

"Oh, my patience!" uttered the nurse, who was sitting there with her charge, a lovely little lady, between five and six years old, Gertrude Baumgarten, who had been kept at home from college that afternoon with an incipient cold. "You wicked boys, what have you been up to? This is your work, I know, Master Cyras!"

"Is it!—who gave you leave to know?" retorted Cyras. He was no more friendly to Jaquet than he used to be, or she to him.

Gertrude backed in fear against the wall, her eyes, haughty and blue as were her mother's, wide open with astonishment. She did not like the appearance of things, and began to cry.

"Now don't be such a little stupid, Gerty," exclaimed Cyras; "there's nothing to cry for. Charley's nose bled, and it got on to our clothes."

"Yes, it's me that's hurt, Jaquet," put in Charley, remembering his grievances and giving way again. "It isn't Cyras."

"Of course it's not," indignantly returned Jaquet; "what harm does he ever come to? You have been striking him, that's what you have been doing, Master

Cyras. You've been thumping him on the nose to make it bleed."

"It's nothing to you if I have," retorted Cyras, in choler. "You just say it again, though, and I'll strike you." He disdained to say it was not so, or to defend himself; he was of by far too indifferent a temperament.

"Oh, nurse—look! look!" screamed out the little girl.

It was supplemented by a sharp scream from Charley; his nose had begun to bleed again; and at that moment there was another interruption. The room-door opened, and the dean and his wife entered; the former still wearing his surplice and hood, and carrying his trencher, for they had been hurriedly disturbed by the noise as they came in from the cathedral.

The nurse, whose temper was not a remarkably calm one, and who disliked the daring Cyras, was busy getting hot water and a basin.

"Look at him, my lady, look at him," cried she; "and it's Master Cyras's doings."

"What does all this mean?" demanded the dean, his eyes wandering from one boy to the other, from their faces to their clothes, his ears taking in the sobbing and the crying. "What is it, I ask?" he sternly continued, for no one had replied.

The dean might ask again and again, but he was none the nearer to getting an answer. Charley, his head over the basin, was crying, and in too much fear and excitement to hear the question. The sight of only a cut finger had always terrified him. Cyras had one of his independent, obstinate fits coming on, and would not open his lips in explanation or self-defence.

"Cyras thumped Charley's nose to make it bleed, papa," said the little girl, unconsciously improving upon Jaquet's assertion.

"How dared you hit him?" exclaimed Lady Grace, turning to Cyras.

The boy looked at her but did not answer. She took it for bravado. Her passion rose. "You are growing a perfect little savage!" And raising her delicately-gloved hand in the heat of the moment, she struck Master Cyras some tingling blows upon his cheeks. Dr. Baumgarten, deeming possibly that to stand witness of the scene did not contribute to the dignity of the Dean of Denham, just escaped from service in his cathedral, turned away, calling upon Cyras to follow him.

It was not Cyras, however, who followed the dean; it was Lady Grace. He had gone to his own study, had laid down his cap, and was taking off his sacred vestments himself, dispensing with the customary aid of his servant. His wife closed the door.

"Ryle, how is this to end?" she asked.

"What do you mean, Grace?"

"I mean about Cyras; but you know very well without my telling you. The boy has been indulged until he is getting the mastery of us all. He positively struck Gertrude the other day."

"As Jaquet chose to interpret it," said the dean. "I inquired into that. Cyras gave the child a tap on the arm. Of course he ought not to have done even that, and I punished him for it."

"You cannot see his failings, Ryle; you supply him with an unlimited command of money——"

"Unlimited!" again interrupted the dean. "You speak without thought, Grace."

"I think too much," she replied. "I have abstained hitherto from serious remonstrance, for if ever I have interfered by a word, you have attributed it, I feel sure, to a jealous feeling, because he is not my own child. But I now tell you that something must be done: if that boy is to stop in the house and rule it, I won't. I will not allow him to ill-treat Charles: I will not, I say."

"Hush, Grace; you are excited. Remember the day.

"I do not forget it. Your son did, probably, when he struck Charles."

"I cannot think he struck him—in that fierce manner."

"Why, you saw the proofs," she retorted. "Don't you mean to inquire into it—and punish him?"

"I certainly do—if you will only allow me time, Grace. Much has not been lost yet."

"If you have any feeling for your other children, you will take measures by which this annoyance may be put a stop to; it is to me most irritating."

Lady Grace left the room, and the dean rang the bell, despatching the servant who answered it for Master Baumgarten. Cyras had not yet gone the length of disobeying his father's mandates, and attended as soon as he had been, what the nurse called, "put to rights," meaning his unsightly shirt changed for a clean one. Charley, his nose swollen, but himself otherwise in order, stole in after him.

"Now, Cyras," began the dean, "we must have an explanation, and if you deserve punishment you shall not escape it. I did not think my boy was a coward, still less that he would ill-treat his younger brother."

The colour flashed into the cheeks of Cyras, and a light into his eyes. But he would not speak.

"Come hither, Charles. Do you see his face, sir?" added the dean, taking the child's hand. "Are you not ashamed to look at it, and to reflect that you have caused him all this grief and pain——"

"Papa," interrupted Charles, "it was not Cyras who hurt me. It was the snobs."

"It—was—the—what?" slowly uttered the dean, his dignity taken a little aback.

"Those charity boys. Frank Dynevor calls them snobs, so does Cyras. I was with the college boys in the cloisters, and they set upon us; there were five or six upon me all at once, papa; they hit me on the nose, and I dare say they would have killed me, only Cyras came running up and fought with them, because I was not strong enough, and got me away. And then he sat down in the cloisters and nursed me as long as I was frightened, and that's how the blood got upon his clothes."

The dean looked from one to the other. "Was it not Cyras who hurt you, then? I scarcely understand."

"Cyras loves me too much to hurt me," cried Charley, lifting his beautiful, deeply-set brown eyes, just like Cyras's, just like the dean's, to his father's face. "He was kissing me all the time in the cloisters; he was so sorry I was hurt; and he says he loves me better than anybody else in the world, and he'll pay off that biggest snob the first time he sees him. Don't you, Cyras?"

The boy turned caressingly to Cyras. Cyras looked red and foolish, not caring to have his private affections betrayed for the public benefit, and he shook off Charley. Dr. Baumgarten drew Cyras to him, and fondly pushed his hair from his forehead.

"Tell me about it, my boy."

"Charley was just talking to some of the college boys, papa, and those horrid charity snobs——"

"Stop a bit. What do you mean by 'snobs'? Very vulgar word, Cyras, and a wrong one for you to use. Of whom do you speak?"

"Oh, you know that big parish school, papa: well, they are always setting on the college boys, and they came up to the cloisters this evening, and Charley, being with the boys, got in for his share of pummelling, and I beat the fellows off him. That's all."

"Why did you not say this to your mamma in the nursery? You made her angry with you for nothing."

Cyras shook back his head with a somewhat defiant movement.

"Mamma's often angry with me for nothing, as far as that goes. I don't care. As to Jaquet," he added, drowning a warning gesture of the dean's, "she's always telling stories of me."

"Now what do you mean by saying, 'I don t care,' Cyras? It is very wrong to be indifferent, even in speech."

"I mean nothing, papa," laughed the boy. "Only I can fight my own battles against Jaquet, and I will. She has no business to interfere with me when she hates me so much; let her concern herself with Charles and Gertrude."

The dean left the boys together, and went in search of his wife. He found her in her chamber. She had taken off her outdoor things, and was now in her dinner dress. The attendant quitted the room as he entered it.

"Grace," said he, going up to her, "there has been a misapprehension, and I have come to set you right. Charley got into an affray with some strange boys in the cloisters (the details of which I shall make it my business to inquire into), and Cyras defended him against them—going into them no doubt like a young lion, for he possesses uncommon spirit—too much of it. We have been casting blame on Cyras unnecessarily."

Lady Grace lifted her eyes to her husband. She knew him to be an honourable man (putting out of the question his divinity and his deanship), and that he would not assert a thing except in perfect good faith.

"Do you mean that Cyras did not beat Charles?"

"He did not. He protected him."

"Why did not Cyras say so, then?"

"His spirit in fault again, I suppose; too proud to defend himself against an unjust imputation," replied the dean. But the dean was wrong, unhappily; Cyras was too carelessly indifferent to defend himself. The dean continued: "I ordered Cyras before

me, and began taking him to task. Charles, who had come in with him, spoke up eagerly, saying Cyras had fought *for* him, to defend him from his assailants, not *against* him. You should have heard the child, Grace, telling how Cyras sat down and nursed him afterwards in the cloisters, kissing him and wiping the blood from his face, and whispering him how he loved him better than anything else in the world. Grace, those two will be affectionate, loving brothers if we do not mar it."

Lady Grace felt that she had been unjust in striking Cyras, as well as guilty of an unladylike action, and perhaps she felt more contrition at the moment than the case really warranted.

"How mar it?" she faltered.

The dean put his arm round his wife's waist before replying. "Grace, you best know what is in your heart—whether or not there is a dislike towards Cyras rankling there. I think there is, and that it makes you unjust to him. If you are not very cautious it may sow dissension between the children."

Grace Baumgarten burst into tears, and laid her face caressingly upon her husband's breast: she loved him almost as passionately as she had ever done. "Ryle," she whispered, "if there be any such feeling, it is born of my love for you."

He smiled to himself. "I know it, my dearest; I

know that you remember he is not your child; yet that does not make the feeling less inexcusable."

"Oh, but you are mistaken in using such a word," she spoke up, rallying herself. "Dislike! Ryle, I do not dislike Cyras. I cannot love him as I do Charles —how can I?—and he is very troublesome and vexes me. Some boys are ten times more wearying than others; they must try the patience of even their own mothers."

Cyras *was* troublesome; one of those boys who are never still—always in some mischief or other. The dean allowed that.

"Grace, listen. I think the boy is *made* worse than he would be; he has hardly fair play between you and Jaquet."

"I never allow Jaquet to be unjust to him."

"Is she ever anything but unjust to him?" returned the dean. "Does she not bring to you tales of him continually? making molehills into mountains, purposely to set you against him? My dear, I fancy it is so."

"If I thought she did I would discharge her to-day," spoke Lady Grace, in haughty impulse.

"Not to-day; it is Sunday," laughed the dean.

"I will watch," said Lady Grace. "But, Ryle, you know you do indulge Cyras too much; you have ever done so. You may not be conscious of it. When a

parent inordinately indulges a child, I do not believe he ever is conscious of it. And there are boys and boys, you know. We may indulge Charles as much as we please, it would never hurt him; but it is bad for a self-willed boy like Cyras."

Lady Grace was right. But no more was said, for the steps of the boys were heard on the stairs, and she opened the door.

"Come in, Cyras; I want you," she said, drawing him gently to her. "Your papa has been telling me that it was not you who hit Charles and made his nose bleed."

"Of course it was not me—as if I would!" said Cyras.

"But why did you not tell me so?"

"It didn't matter," said the boy.

"It did matter. It caused me to punish you, for I thought you deserved it. I am sorry to have done so, Cyras, but the fault was yours. You should have told me the truth."

"Sometimes when you are angry with me, mamma, and I tell you the truth, you don't believe me. You believe Jaquet instead of me. I don't get fair play in this house with anybody except papa."

The dean glanced at his wife. This was bearing out his own hints to her.

"Jaquet hates me, mamma; you know she always did hate me."

"I hope not, Cyras. And I do not think she would dare to say to me what was not true."

"Oh, wouldn't she!" cried the bold boy. "She does it to get me into a row with you and make you punish me. Didn't she tell you it was me that made Charley's nose bleed just now, and didn't you believe her and hit me for it? It wasn't me, and nobody had told her it was me; but she took and said it."

Lady Grace, struck with the argument, if not with its eloquence, paused in thought.

"It's her spite," said Cyras. "Charley and Gerty might see it is, only they are little duffers, and can't believe anything bad of Jaquet. She pets them both up, and gives them sugarsticks."

"Well, we will go to tea now, and you shall take it in my room this evening, and I'll pour it out for you," said Lady Grace briskly, kissing both the lads.

"I have made my mind up, Ryle," said Lady Grace to her husband later. "Jaquet goes."

And, to Jaquet's infinite astonishment, she had her warning the next day. After a few moments given to getting over her discomfiture, she told her lady that at the end of the month she had been intending to give warning on her own side, for she was going to "alter her condition."

Which meant that she was about to get married.

But when the name of the intended bridegroom was disclosed, it provoked some laughter from the dean's household, especially from his eldest son. For the name was—

"Bones."

## CHAPTER VII.

### WITH SIR WILLIAM CHANT.

In the handsome drawing-room of their town residence in Berkeley Square sat the Dean of Denham and Lady Grace Baumgarten. It was a fine evening in April; the dinner-hour was approaching, and they were awaiting a guest: an old friend whom the dean had met in the street unexpectedly that day and had invited.

Years have elapsed, and the dean, approaching fifty now, is more portly than he was wont to be; but Lady Grace carries her age well, and looks not a day older than the period a woman never confesses to having passed—five-and-thirty. But in the dean's face there is a look of anxious care: what can the flourishing Dean of Denham have to trouble *him?*

A great deal more than the world at large suspected. Gifted with an aristocratic wife, and she with aristocratic tastes and habits, the dean had fallen long and long ago into a more expensive rate of living than

his means permitted. Embarrassment followed as a necessary consequence; trifling enough at first, and easily put off—not done away with, but deferred. But the plan does not answer; it is something like the nails in the horseshoe, which doubled as they went on; and Dr. Baumgarten had now attained to a height of perplexity in his pecuniary affairs not frequently reached by a dignitary of the Church.

Half the labour of his later life had been to hide it from Lady Grace, and he had in a great measure succeeded. She could not avoid knowing that they were in debt, but she had no conception to what extent, and debt is rather a fashionable complaint. She also found that the dean invariably ran short of ready money; but that is not uncommon either.

In one sense of the word, the debts which had gathered about them might be put down to the score of Lady Grace. At the death of her mother, Lady Avon, she had come in to all the property that would be hers—two thousand a-year. With that and the dean's income they might have lived sufficiently well. But Lady Grace had little idea of the value of money, and was given to thinking that one pound would go as far as four or five. Living in Berkeley Square was her doing, and was quite wrong and ridiculous with their narrowed means.

It had come about in this way. Two years before

the present chapter opens, Lady Grace had come to London on a visit to her brother. Lord Avon had never married, and spent much of his time abroad, keeping his house—a small one—in Piccadilly done up in brown holland and lavender. However, he took possession of it for a season, invited his sister to stay with him, and the dean, if he could come. A season in town was perfectly delightful to Lady Grace.

"I shall not be able to do without it now that I have tasted its sweets again," she said to her brother one day. "I think I must look out for some furnished house to be had cheaply, Henry, and take it."

"All right," said his lordship, who had given in to Grace from the time she was a baby.

Lady Grace found a charming house in Berkeley Square. "Just the thing," she observed to her brother and to the dean, who was in town for a week. "It is only a little house, and may be had on almost one's own terms: may be rented yearly, furnished; or we may purchase the lease and the furniture as it stands. Of course, the latter is out of the question, but we might hire it. It belonged to an old lady who is now dead."

"We cannot possibly afford it," whispered the dean aside to Lord Avon. "Pray don't encourage Grace to think of it."

"What's that you are saying, Ryle?" cried his wife.

"Not afford it! Oh, but we must; we will afford it. I'll economize in other matters."

Lord Avon generously came to the rescue. He purchased the lease, which had twelve years to run, he bought the furniture, and made a present of it to his sister.

So there was no rent to pay in Berkeley Square, and this was the second year they had been in it.

But the money went all too quickly in other ways. What with the household they kept up, the entertainments Lady Grace liked to give, and the expenses of the children, Dr. Baumgarten's income ought to have been doubled.

Gertrude had her governess—a French lady, who spoke and taught the three languages equally well: French, English, German. Mademoiselle Léon was a most desirable individual, and a finished instructress; but these exceptional governesses have to be paid according to their merits. Gertrude's masters were also expensive.

Charles was at Oxford; and though not especially extravagant, he did not live as a hermit. Cyras? What of Cyras?

Cyras had given trouble. Was it likely to be otherwise? It had always been the dean's intention that Cyras should follow his own calling, the Church. Cyras knew this, but had not objected, although never

intending to fall in with it. Make a parson of him! Dress him up in a black coat and a white choker! the youngster was wont to say behind the dean's back. No! He'd rather go in for the clownship at Astley's; rather be a jockey at Newmarket; rather hew timber in the backwoods of America; rather perch himself on a three-legged stool at a dark desk in a City office—yes, even that. None of the fellows who went in for those things need have a conscience, but a parson must have one; so he'd leave the Church to those who liked consciences.

This treason was reported to the dean, and he ordered Cyras before him, and administered a stern rebuke. But he could make no impression upon him. Cyras argued the matter out; he was not insolent, but he was persistent; he had not grown less independently reckless with his advancing years—reckless, that is to say, of other people's opinions when they clashed with his own; though, in spite of the dean's reproaches to the contrary, the objection to enter the Church proved Cyras not to be so totally devoid of thought as his father assured him he was. Cyras was eighteen then, and was to have gone to college in the autumn.

"It won't be of any use my going to Oxford, papa," the handsome young fellow urged. "To send me there would be waste of time and money. I have

quite as much learning as I shall ever want. Make Charley into a parson instead of me; it won't go against *his* conscience."

"You know, Cyras, that Charles has set his heart upon the Bar."

"And a very good calling too," rejoined Cyras, equably. "You are in the Church yourself, papa—one of its shining lights, you know; but that's no reason why you should force a son into it."

"What is to become of you, Cyras?"

"Of me?—oh, anything. What I wanted was to have a commission bought for me in the army, but——"

"I have explained to you that I could not afford it," interrupted the dean, with some agitation, for it brought before him the vexatious state of his finances. "Would you wish to remain a burden upon me, Cyras? Do you expect me to keep you for ever?"

"Not a bit of it, father," said Cyras, heartily. "I'd rather make money myself, and keep *you*."

The dean could hardly forbear a smile.

"How would you make it?" he asked.

"Oh, go out to the gold-diggings and dig it up—something or other of that sort."

"Don't talk recklessly," reproved the dean.

"As I could not have a commission bought, I don't much care what I do," Cyras was beginning; but Dr. Baumgarten laid his hand upon his arm.

"Cyras, I have told you the truth," he said, with emotion. "I had not the purchase-money, neither could I have made you the necessary yearly allowance. My boy, you little know how hard up I am, and how claims press upon me daily. Sometimes I think the trouble will be too much for me."

"I'm sure *I* will not add to it," cried Cyras, in his good-natured, careless way. "I shall get along first-rate, father, you'll see."

"If you would only enter the Church, Cyras, I could take care of your preferment; you'd be provided for for life. Don't bring up that nonsense to me again about conscience. I should be deeply grieved to think that a son of mine could have aught of sin upon his conscience to unfit him for entering upon a sacred calling."

"Oh, it's not that," said Cyras, lightly. "I wouldn't mind taking orders to-morrow, but a parson must lead so straitlaced a life—at least, if he is what a parson ought to be—and I couldn't do that, you know. I couldn't, indeed, father. I should be turning Roman Catholic, or something of that sort, to get rid of my gown—Methodist parson, perhaps."

The dean sighed. It seemed a hopeless case.

"I will talk with you again, Cyras," he said; "but I do fear you are going to be another source of trouble and expense to me."

The opportunity for further talk did not come. Cyras disappeared from home; and the next heard of him was that he was on board ship, sailing for New Zealand. His letter to the dean, despatched by the pilot who had conveyed the ship down Channel, was characteristic of him:

"My dear Father,

"Here I am, on board the good ship *Rising Star*, a clipper, A 1, bound for Wellington. I know you think me careless and indifferent, and all the rest of it, but you may believe me when I say that I would not willingly bring trouble on you for all the world. I know I shall get on over there. They'll give me a place at once in Brice's shipping house. I'm sure of that, if I choose to take it—I've spoken to Brice here, and he says so; but I may, perhaps, find my way to Melbourne instead, and try my luck at the goldfields. I don't mean to be any more expense at all to you; I hope I shan't be, and I've shipped as a common sailor before the mast to work my way out, rather than ask you for the passage-money. I dare say you'd not have given it me if I had asked; you'd have forbidden me to go, and I thought the safest way was to say nothing about it. So I chiselled a young sailor fellow out of his papers—he had broken his leg, and must lie up for a year to come—and I went down to

the office, rigged out in a glazed hat and pea-jacket, stood there as bold as any sailor among them, and signed articles for the *Rising Star*. She is fourteen hundred tons burden. I'll write again when we reach Wellington; or, if I don't like the look of things out there, I'll come back in the ship. And with best love to you, dear papa, and to mamma, and Charley, and Gertrude,

"I am, your affectionate son,

"CYRAS."

Cyras did not come back in the ship. The dean transmitted him some money to Wellington, and Cyras sent it back again. He sent with it a loving letter of thanks, telling his father that he was getting enough to keep him, and did not want money. After that they heard from him at intervals, from Australia or from New Zealand, as the case might be. According to his own account he was always flourishing, and he once sent a lovely gold bracelet to Gertrude and a twenty-pound note to Charley.

Three years had elapsed since his first departure, and now Cyras was back again—not to remain, he told them; only to see them and the old country once more. Charles—I think this has been said—was keeping his terms at Oxford, and the dean and his wife were living in Berkeley Square. Cyras seemed

to have brought over plenty of money. He had settled down as clerk in a shipping house at Wellington—Brice and Jansen—and had six months' leave from it. He was twenty-one now, and but little changed—gay, rattling, reckless in speech as of old; but exceedingly handsome, exceedingly like what the dean had been before him. Only in one point did he not resemble his father, and that was in stature: the dean was tall and stately, Cyras was very little above middle height, and very slight.

"And what have you been doing with yourself to-day, Cyras?" inquired the dean of his son, who was singing to himself in an undertone as he stood at the window looking out on the square. "I wanted you this morning, but you were not to be found."

"I went to Norwood to see Aunt Charlotte," replied Cyras. "She took me into the Crystal Palace; we lunched there."

"Oh, indeed! How is she?"

"Flourishing," said Cyras. "She fired off no end of questions at me about the Brices of Wellington."

"Naturally," remarked the dean. "Her husband and Brice of Wellington are brothers."

"Are the Brices of Wellington nice people, Cyras? asked Lady Grace.

"The nicest people going, mamma."

"And well off?"

"They just are. Why Brice and Jansen is about the first shipping firm in Wellington."

The reader may not have forgotten that Charlotte Dane, sister to poor Edith, married a Mr. George Brice, of London, with whom she had become acquainted when he was visiting his uncle, Brice the surgeon, at Great Whitton. It was this Aunt Charlotte Cyras had been to see. She lived in a handsome house at Norwood, for they had become very wealthy.

And whilst he was speaking Brice the surgeon came in; for he was the guest expected. After greeting Lady Grace and the dean, he turned to Cyras, holding him before him by the lappets of his coat, gazing intently into his face. He had not seen Cyras for three years.

"What a likeness!—what a likeness! It is yourself over again," he said to the dean. "Just what your face was at his age."

Dr. Baumgarten laughed. "You did not know me when I was his age, Brice—nor for five or six years after it.'

"It is a wonderful likeness, is it not, Lady Grace?" went on the surgeon.

"I have always said so," she answered.

Gertrude entered; a beautiful girl, with the fair delicate skin and the proud blue eyes of her mother.

She was a pleasant girl, not self-willed, as Grace used to be, but sweet and gentle.

"How is Lord Avon?" asked the surgeon.

"Quite well," said Grace; "and in London. He was on the Continent all last year, but this year he is at home."

"As good-natured as ever, I expect."

"Just the same," laughed Lady Grace.

They sat after dinner in the drawing-room talking together until nine o'clock, when Mr. Brice had to leave them. He was engaged to a gathering at a noted physician's house near Hanover Square: a dozen or so of learned men, chiefly medical men, were about to meet to discuss a discovery of the day.

"I wish you would accompany me," said the doctor to his host. "You could not fail to appreciate what you will hear, and I'm sure you will not repent the introduction to Sir William Chant. He has hardly his equal."

"I should like to go very well," said Dr. Baumgarten.

"Any room for me?" spoke Cyras, quaintly.

"To be sure," assented Mr. Brice. "Come along."

This visit need not have been recorded but for a matter which grew out of it. They spent a pleasant and profitable hour or two at Sir William Chant's, the dean especially enjoying the society of Sir William himself, to whom he took a great liking; and they

came away soon after eleven o'clock. In passing a side street they suddenly fell upon a commotion; wild shouts arose from the mob, while flames were pouring out of the windows of one of the houses. Cyras made for the scene at a gallop; the surgeon ran; Dr. Baumgarten went after them. There was much pushing in the street, every one wanting to get where he could best stare at the windows. In the midst of it all, an engine, with its firemen, clashed and dashed round the corner, scattering the people right and left.

Cyras bethought himself that his father and the old doctor might not be quite so able to battle with a mob as he, and he looked about for them. A minute's search and he came upon his father on a doorstep. The dean had apparently sat down, and was lying back, as if he had no life in him.

"Father!" exclaimed Cyras. "Father!"

Looking closely, Cyras saw that the face was very pale, and that a blue tinge seemed to be drawn in a circlet round the mouth. The dean gasped once or twice and opened his eys.

"Have you been hurt, father? Are you ill?"

Dr. Baumgarten rose up, with the help of Cyras. 'No," said he; "no, I have not been hurt. It is a fainting-fit that I have now and then—not often."

"A fainting-fit!" repeated Cyras, wondering what

a tall, fine, strong man like the dean could have to do with fainting-fits.

"It's something of the sort. My breath seems to leave me suddenly; I have to fight for it; and then a faintness comes on," added the dean, as he walked away upon the arm of Cyras.

Cyras had picked up odds and ends of notions on his travels. "I suppose the heart's all right, father?" he said.

"Oh dear, yes," replied Dr. Baumgarten. "What with Denham and Great Whitton and private matters, I think I'm a little overworked. Sometimes I feel as though I wanted rest; that's all, Cyras."

"I should take rest," observed Cyras.

"That's easier said than done, my boy."

"Look here, father; put the deanery and the other places out to nurse for a few months, and come over with me to New Zealand when I go back again. It would set you up for the rest of your life; you'd come back stronger than any parson in the Denham diocese."

"Hush," said the dean, hastily withdrawing his arm from that of Cyras. "There's Brice."

Mr. Brice, having extricated himself from the crowd, was standing at the end of this quiet street looking out for them.

"It's a bad fire," he remarked unsuspiciously, "but

we can do no good, and are best away from the fray. And now I'll wish you good-night; for my road lies that way, and yours this."

"You are sure you will not be able to come to us again in Berkeley Square?" said the dean, as their hands met and clasped.

"Can't," said Mr. Brice. "I'm promised to-morrow morning to George and Charlotte at Norwood, and I go down home in the evening. It has been a great thing, my getting this little bit of a holiday. You'll remember to deliver my messages to my nephew and the rest, Cyras, when you get back to Wellington?"

"I'll remember them, sir."

"Father," began Cyras, the following morning, when, as chance had it, they were alone for a few minutes after breakfast, "don't you think it might be as well if you saw a doctor?"

It was exactly what the dean *had* been thinking. But he did not acknowledge it.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered in a careless tone.

"I should just have told old Brice right out last night," said Cyras.

"One can't very well talk of things in the street," returned the dean.

Dr. Baumgarten went out a little before one o'clock on his way to Sir William Chant's. He thought it a

good time to catch him; he would probably have about got rid of his morning patients. An idea had struck him that he would rather tell his tale of doubtful sickness to Sir William, a stranger, than to a medical man who knew him better. Such a fancy penetrates to many of us.

Sir William would be disengaged in a few minutes, the servant said; he was then with his last patient. Dr. Baumgarten handed the man his card—"The Dean of Denham"—but desired that it should not be given in until his master was alone.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Dean; very pleased that you should have called upon me," was Sir William's warm greeting when his stately visitor was ushered in.

"What shall you say, if I tell you that I have come as a patient?" returned the dean.

"I hope not."

"Yes, it is so. That is—I have—have—I have experienced a little annoyance once or twice, which perhaps it may be as well to speak of," rapidly continued the dean, getting over his momentary hesitation. "It amounts to nothing, I dare say."

"You do not look as if much were amiss with you, sir," smiled Sir William. "Will you take this chair?"

The chair he touched was the patient's chair, facing the light. Sir William sat opposite to it in the shade.

"Before I enter upon the matter, Sir William," said the dean, as he took the seat, "I must get you to make me a promise. It is a very simple request, and I am sure that you will deal openly with me. If you find reason to suspect that there is anything radically wrong, will you candidly avow it to me?'

"I wonder what it is?" thought Sir William. "*Something*, I am sure. Do you suspect any particular mischief yourself?" he inquired.

"Well, I suppose I ought to do so."

"The heart?" queried Sir William.

"That, if anything. Possibly it may arise only from my being somewhat overdone with work and other matters. I have been attacked at times rather curiously."

"Will you describe the attacks.'

"There is not much to describe," said the dean. "A sudden stoppage of the heart, accompanied by a strange inward fluttering, which I feel to my fingers, ends; and then a faintness, almost, but not quite, amounting to a fainting-fit."

Sir William Chant put another question or two as to symptoms, and then passed on to another phase.

"How frequently do you have these attacks?"

"Very seldom indeed. I have only had about half-a-dozen in all. The first time was after boating, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford; the last

time was yesterday evening; and that covers a good many years, you perceive."

"Yesterday evening!" repeated the doctor, struck with the remark. "Not when you were here?"

"No; afterwards. In going home, we got into a crowd collected at a fire. I ran, and otherwise exerted myself, and the attack came on."

"And sometimes, I expect, it has come on from mental emotion?"

"Yes; more frequently so. What do you make of it, Sir William?"

Sir William Chant smiled, rose, and took some instrument from a drawer in his table. "You must let me test your organs a little before I can give you an answer."

"Beginning with the heart, I suppose?" observed the dean, as he unbuttoned his clerical coat and waistcoat.

"Beginning with it and ending with it, I fancy," thought the physician; but he did not say so.

The examination, a slight one, was over. The instrument was in its place again, the clerical coat and waistcoat had been refastened, and the gentlemen sat, each in his chair, facing one another as before.

"Well?" said the dean, for Sir William did not speak.

"Yes, undoubtedly the seat of mischief lies in the heart. It is not quite as sound as it ought to be."

"Am I in danger? I must *beg* of you to tell me the truth," added the dean, finding he was not immediately answered.

"My dear Mr. Dean, in one sense of the word you are in danger; all people must be in danger whose heart is in the condition of yours; but the extent of the peril depends very much upon yourself."

"You mean that with tranquillity it may be reduced to a minimum?"

"I do. With perfect tranquillity maintained of mind and body, your heart may serve you for years and years to come."

"I may not be able to command that."

"But you must do so. My dear sir, *you must.* I do not know which would be the worse for you, worry of mind or undue exertion of body."

"He would be a clever man who is able to ensure himself a life exempt from worry," remarked the dean.

"I mean emotional worry—worry that runs to agitation," said Sir William. "Of small worries we all have enough and to spare; life is full of them. Even these I would have you meet calmly."

"If I can."

"Some matters will not admit of an 'if,' Dr. Baumgarten—must not be allowed to do so. Every

individual has so much under his control. And—I think I may understand that with each attack you have had you were able to trace it to some emotion or other. Is that not so?"

"It is so."

"Well, then, what more need of argument? Keep emotion from you, and you will not have the attacks."

"On the other hand—I think I am to understand that should any undue agitation arise, despite every precaution, to induce an attack, it might be fatal? My life may pass away in it?"

"Yes. But you must not allow it to arise."

With a few quiet words of thanks Dr. Baumgarten arose; he put his fingers into his waistcoat pocket.

"No, no, no; no fee from you, Dr. Baumgarten," spoke the physician, warmly. "You were my honoured guest last night; let me have the pleasure of regarding our interview to-day as one of friendship. And be sure to come to me whenever you want advice of any kind."

"So be it, Sir William; and I thank you greatly," answered the dean, as their hands met.

He walked slowly along the street on his return to Berkeley Square, deep in thought, unable to put away an impression which had taken hold of him—that for him the dread fiat had gone forth. It seemed as sure as though he heard the death-bell tolling for him in his coffin.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AFTER THE DINNER-PARTY.

ONCE more in the drawing-room at Berkeley Square sat the dean and Lady Grace. They had entered the room at almost the same moment, dressed to receive guests. The dean gave a dinner-party that evening, and Lady Grace, as she sat at the window, observed the first carriage, as she thought, driving up to the door.

Four or five weeks have elapsed since the dean's interview with Sir William Chant, and the sweet month of June is close at hand. The dean has been feeling well of late—that is, he has not had any return of his malady; but he is overwhelmed with worry. Lady Grace has been extravagant this season, and her husband knows not how to defer any longer the embarrassments which creditors are pressing upon him. He has been staying at Great Whitton, and has only now been in town a day or two.

An idea has lately been forcing itself upon him

which he does not like to entertain; yet, unwelcome as it is, he begins to fear he shall have to act upon it. It is that he shall disclose his position to his brother-in-law and obtain from him seasonable help. It might take from four to five thousand pounds to extricate him from his dilemma and put him straight again; probably quite five. Then he would have to make all known to Grace, and persuade her to live in quiet retirement for a time at Great Whitton, and pay back Lord Avon by degrees. But Dr. Baumgarten does not like to ask this loan of Lord Avon; one or two loans he has had already from him. The good-natured earl has always been generous to them; apart from the Berkeley Square house he often slips a ten-pound note into his sister's hand, of which she makes no secret to her husband, and for which she hardly thanks Lord Avon. "He has no wife," remarks Lady Grace; "why should he not occasionally make me presents?"

It was to be a formal dinner-party this evening; one given yearly by Dr. Baumgarten to a few nearly superannuated lights of the Church, who came in their mitred chariots, with their old wives beside them. It was not at all one delighted in by Lady Grace, who called the worthy people "ancient fogies." Neither Charles nor Gertrude, if at home, would have been admitted to it. Cyras would have been still more out

of his element than they. Cyras, who would soon be on the wing again for a distant land, was paying a farewell visit to Charles at Oxford; Gertrude was spending the day with their friends in Eaton Place—the Maude-Dynevors.

"That carriage has passed out of the square; I fancied it was coming here," remarked Lady Grace as she turned from the window.

The dean stood with his elbow leaning on the mantelpiece, the hand supporting his head. A strange weight of care sat upon his brow; so great, so strange, that it did not escape the notice of his wife.

"Is anything the matter, Ryle? You do not look well."

"Well? Oh yes; I am quite well."

"You are troubled, then. What is it?"

"Nothing; it is nothing, Grace. The day has been very hot, and heat always makes me feel languid, you know."

And the dean removed his elbow, smoothed his brow, and called up a smile, just as the first black silk apron, worn by the Bishop of Denham, came sailing in. In point of fact, the dean had cause to show an uneasy front: a terrible blow had fallen upon him—painfully perplexing tidings that he knew not how to cope with.

But never had the Dean of Denham been more

courteous, more brilliant, more alive to the duties of a host than he was that evening. He sat at the head of his board, after Lady Grace had withdrawn, and the sociable old bishops admired his learning, retorted to his wit, yielded to his fascinations, and enjoyed his good wine. It was a remark amongst their lordships the next day that Baumgarten had surpassed himself. The ladies thought the same when he appeared with their lords in the drawing-room. Gertrude Baumgarten was in it then, and was singing to them some of her sweetest songs, but they forgot the songs when they listened to the dean.

A servant was crossing the saloon with a coffee-cup; he halted for a moment near his master, and spoke in a tone imperceptible to other ears. It was Moore, who had lived so long in the family; a middle-aged man now, and quite a confidential servant.

"Mr. Fuller is come again, sir; and another gentleman with him. I have shown them into the library."

Drawing towards the door, unconsciously as it were, with a word to one, a smile for another, the dean presently passed out of it, unnoticed, for they were engaged with their coffee, and Gertrude was singing again. In the library were two gentlemen, and farther off, sitting on the edge of a handsome chair, as if handsome chairs and himself did not often come into contact with each other, was a shabby-looking man.

The man had been there for several hours, and had had substantial refreshments served to him more than once.

Mr. Fuller was the dean's lawyer. The gentleman he had now brought with him was the dean's banker, and the man was a sheriff's officer. The Dean of Denham had been arrested.

The Dean of Denham had been personally arrested! Such calamities have occurred to divines even higher in the Church than he. As he came up to his door that afternoon, and put his foot upon his door-sill to enter it, he was touched upon the shoulder by the man sitting now in that uneasy chair. The exclusive dean shrank from the contaminating contact, his haughty pride rose, and he spoke severely:

"Fellow, what are you doing?"

"The Reverend Ryle Baumgarten, Dean of Denham, I believe. Sir, you are my prisoner."

Staggered, shocked, almost bewildered, he, by some process of persuasion or reasoning, induced the man to enter his house, and wait while he sent for his lawyer. The lawyer came. Arrangement appeared to be hopeless, for the dean was worse than out of funds, and of revenues to fall back upon he had none. There was a consultation. The dean said that he must receive the bishops that night, as had been decided; and an awful sickness fell upon him at the prospect of

going to prison. Mr. Fuller threw out a word of suggestion touching Lord Avon. But Lord Avon, as the dean knew, had gone to Epsom races; he might not be home till midnight, if then. Mr. Fuller knew the dean to be a man of honour, whose word was not to be questioned, and he passed it, to go quietly to his destination the following morning, provided he could remain at liberty in his house for that night.

Mr. Fuller gave an undertaking to the capturer, answering for the dean's good faith, and the man was made at home in the library, Moore alone being cognizant of his business. Meanwhile the dean wrote a note to his banker, of which Mr. Fuller took charge.

The banker, wishing to be courteous, answered it in person, and sat now at the library table, the dean on one side of him, the lawyer on the other. But of what use was his coming? He had been privately saying to the lawyer that he and his house were in for it too deeply as it was, and not a shilling more would they advance; no, not to keep the dean out of purgatory, let alone out of prison. He intimated somewhat of the same now to the dean, though in more courtly terms.

They consulted together in subdued tones, not to be audible to the man at the other end of the room, but to no earthly effect; it all came round to the same point: the dean had neither money nor money's

worth; even the very furniture of the house he was in was not his; it had been settled by Lord Avon on his sister, and the dean's debts could not touch it. The furniture at the Deanery, the furniture at Great Whitton Rectory was already mortgaged, as it may be said, for money which had been lent upon it; heavy liabilities were upon him, and he had no means of meeting them—he had put off and put off the evil day, only to make it all the worse, now that it had come to this.

"I'll try to see Lord Avon in the morning; he'll be back by that time," remarked Mr. Fuller.

"And only to find that he has gone off to Paris by to-night's train," said the dean. "He talked of going over this week."

Nothing could be done then; nothing whatever. The lawyer was unable to help, the banker would not do so, and the conference closed. Mr. Fuller promised to be there again in the morning. Dr. Baumgarten, upon thorns in more ways than one, went back to his wondering bishops, the comforting assurance that he must surrender the next morning playing havoc with his brain.

"Oh, here's the dean at last! Lady Grace feared you must be taken ill."

"Never in better health in my life," laughed the dean, gaily. "I was summoned to the library on

business; people will come at troublesome times. Your lordship is winning, I see—a knight and a castle already; fair trophies, but Lady Grace generally contrives to lose all before her when she attempts chess."

The guests departed at the sober hour of eleven, and Lady Grace immediately prepared to go to her dressing-room. The dean had been making up his mind to tell her while he talked to the bishops. "A smooth tongue covers an aching heart"—how runs the proverb? In all the world perhaps there could not have been found that night a more aching heart than Ryle Baumgarten's. The time had come when his wife must know, and the telling would be to him as a very bitter pill.

"Grace, don't go up just yet. Good-night, Gertrude; run on, my dear."

"Good-night, dear papa."

"Ryle!" uttered Lady Grace, as the door closed, "you are not well. I am sure of it. Something must be wrong. What *were* you doing when you were out of the room so long to-night?"

The dean leaned against the wall by the side of the fireplace, all his assumed bravery gone out of him. When the spirits have been forced for hours, the revulsion is sometimes terrible. She went up to him in alarm and placed her hands upon him. He took them in his own.

"Yes, Grace, something is wrong. It seems," he added, with a ghastly face, "as if I should almost die in telling you of it."

Her lips turned whiter than his, and her voice sank to a dread whisper. "Something has happened to Charles?"

"No, no; the children are all safe; it has nothing to do with them. It has to do with myself alone, and —with you—in a degree—as part of myself."

"Ryle, you are ill," she faintly said. "You have some disorder that you are concealing from me. Why do you keep me in suspense?"

"Ill in mind, Grace. Oh, my wife, how shall I tell you that I have been an embarrassed man for years, and that now the blow has fallen."

She shivered inwardly, but would not let it be seen. "What is the blow?"

"I am arrested. I must go to prison to-morrow morning."

So little was Lady Grace familiar with "arrests" and "prisons" that she could not at once comprehend him; and when she did so, the popular belief seemed to be in her mind that a dean, so enshrined in divinity and dignity, could never be made an inmate of a prison. The first emotion passed, they sat down close together on the sofa, and Grace poured forth question upon question. What had brought it on? How

much did they owe? Why didn't he tell the lawyers to settle it?

Puzzling questions, all, for the dean to answer. It had been coming on too long for him to be able to trace "what" had brought it on, except that they had lived at too great an expense. Little by little, step by step, the grain of sand had grown to a desert. How much they owed he could not precisely say; and, oh! the mockery of the innocent remark: "Why didn't he tell the lawyers to settle it?"

"Ryle!" she suddenly exclaimed, "you had an advance from the bankers a day or two ago. I saw you draw a cheque for two hundred and twenty pounds—don't you remember? I came in as you were writing it. Is that all gone?"

"It was the last cheque they cashed—the last they would cash. The money was not for myself."

"For whom, then?"

"That is of no importance. It is gone."

"But you must tell me. You know, Ryle, now that it has come to this pass, you must not keep me in the dark. I must know how much you owe, and how the money has gone, and the right and the wrong of everything. Of course, there's nothing to be done now but to get Henry to help us; and if he won't, or can't do so, we must raise money upon my property. What did that two hundred and twenty pounds go in?"

"Arrests seem to be running in the family just now," observed the dean, with a bitter smile. "Cyras —Cyras—well, I had to give that cheque to Cyras to get rid of a little trouble. It was not much, Grace; as a drop of water to the ocean."

Whether as a drop, or a bucket, it seemed to freeze Lady Grace. "Cyras!" she ejaculated scornfully. "What *right* have you to help him when you cannot afford to do it? I shall tell Cyras what I think of his despicable conduct."

"Don't do that, Grace. The trouble was not Cyras's. He has not had a shilling from me."

"You have just said he had that cheque."

"Yes—to extricate another."

"Another?" echoed Lady Grace, looking at him. "It was not—oh, Ryle! it surely was not Charles?"

"Yes it was," said the dean, in a low, sad tone. "He got into debt, and Cyras took my cheque to Oxford to release him. No one can be more repentant than Charles is; I do not think it will ever happen again. It was not his fault; he was drawn into it by others. I had the nicest possible letter from him this morning; he says it will be a life's lesson to him. I believe it will. There—let us leave Charles's affairs for mine. Grace, this blow will kill me."

"If you went to prison it would be quite enough to kill you; but that cannot be thought of. As a last

resource, money, I say, must be raised on my property."

"My dear, I thought you knew better than that. It is yours for your life only, and then it descends to your children. The Lord Chancellor himself could not raise a shilling upon it."

Lady Grace started up. "Is it so? Then what in the world is to be done?"

He did not say what—he foresaw too well, and his countenance betrayed it. She put her arm round his neck.

"No, Ryle, dearest, you never shall; there shall be no prison for you whilst I live. I will be back in an hour."

"Why, where are you going?" he exclaimed.

"To my brother. A cab will take me there in safety. He must manage this. Now, don't attempt to stop me, Ryle; what harm could I come to? If you are afraid it might do so, come with me."

"I wish I could. I am a prisoner."

"A prisoner!" she ejaculated. "Here, in your own house?"

"I may not quit it, except to exchange it for a prison. But, my dear, listen to reason. You are not likely to find your brother at this hour of the night; perhaps he is not even back from the races. Fuller will see after him in the morning."

"I shall go and find him now," she persisted.

She had a bonnet and shawl brought down, and a man-servant was ordered to attend her: not Moore, who could not be spared from home. For once in her life Lady Grace condescended a word of explanation. "She had business with Lord Avon, and the dean felt too unwell to accompany her." She remembered one important item of information she was ignorant of, and went back to ask it.

"Ryle, how much are you arrested for?"

"The sum that I am arrested for is about four hundred pounds. But now that this crisis has come, I shall not escape without making arrangements to pay all I owe," added the dean.

"And how much is it in the whole?"

"Close upon five thousand pounds."

Grace looked at him; he was sitting back in the large chair, almost, as it seemed to her, gasping for breath. She saw how much the confession had shaken him. Running across the room, she kissed him fondly.

"Don't distress yourself, my husband. Henry will see that all comes right. I'll make him do so."

The man who had been bidden to attend her stood at the cab-door, holding it open. As Lady Grace took her seat the thought crossed her that she would not take the man—servants find out things so quickly.

"Richard, I think I shall not want you," she said. "I will go alone. Tell the man where to drive to—Lord Avon's."

So Lady Grace went alone to the earl's residence in Piccadilly. He was not at home. His valet thought he might be at the club; he had heard his lordship talking with a friend about dining there when they got back from Epsom.

Away to the club went Lady Grace. The hall-porter, who was airing himself on the steps, watched the cab stop, saw a lady looking out of it, and condescended to go down to it and see what she wanted.

Yes, the earl was there, he and some other noblemen had been dining together. Lady Grace sent a message, which the porter took in and delivered.

A lady in a cab was waiting to see his lordship. She wished him to come to her immediately.

A titter went round the table, and the earl exploded a little at the porter. "What the deuce? A lady to see him? What next? Who was she?"

The porter could not say anything about her except that she was in a cab.

"What's her name?" returned the earl. "Impudence! Go and ask."

The man went and came back again, interrupting the chaff that was then in full swing round the table. It dropped to silence, awaiting the announcement.

"It is Lady Grace Baumgarten, my lord."

Lord Avon gave a prolonged stare, and then hurried out. A youngster at the table began to take liberties with Lady Grace's name.

"Hold your silly tongue, you young fool," reprimanded an older man. "Don't you know that the Lady Grace is his sister and the wife of the Dean of Denham?"

"Oh!" said the young fellow, feeling that he should like to sink into his shoes.

"Why, Grace, what's up now?" cried Lord Avon, as he approached the cab. "Is Berkeley Square on fire? Or is Baumgarten made Primate of All England?"

"Come inside, Henry, for a minute; I want to speak to you. The dean's arrested for five thousand pounds."

"Oh, is he?" equably returned Lord Avon. "He has been a clever fellow to keep out of it so long. No one but a dean could have done it."

"And you must find the money to release him."

"Anything else?" inquired Lord Avon.

"You *will* find it, Henry; you must."

"Look here, Grace," said the earl, "thousands are not so plentiful with me; but if they were, and I went to the sponging-house to-night, and paid the money down, there'd be the same to do over and over again to-morrow."

"No, there would not—but there's no time to explain. Went to where, did you say?"

"Where's he taken to?"

"He is at home. They have gone out of their usual way, he said, and allowed him to be at home to-night: a man is there, and will take him away in the morning. Henry, it must not be; you must come to his aid."

"What I can do will not be of much use, I fear. I know more of Baumgarten's affairs than you do; in fact, I have already helped him out of one or two pits; though of course things have been kept from you."

"Whilst I have been the culprit, I expect. It is my extravagance that has brought this about, not his. Only fancy, Henry! We had a lot of the old bishops to dinner to-night, and Ryle sat at the table just as usual, knowing he was virtually a prisoner, whilst the wicked man, his capturer, was waiting for him in the library!"

"A fine state of things!"

"You must help him out of it. The Dean of Denham can't go to prison; such a scandal never was heard of. Henry, I won't stir from your side, this night, till you give me the money."

"Where am I to get it from!" quietly asked the earl. "The birds of the air?"

"Nonsense. You possess a cheque-book, I suppose."

"I don't carry it about with me. All this comes of marrying a parson. In position, Baumgarten was beneath you——"

"Hold your tongue," interrupted Lady Grace. "He is an honour to the family; and I know, if he has lived beyond his means, it has been for my sake. Will you go home with me now and talk things over with him?"

"No," said the earl; "I can't to-night. What with the day's racing, and the dinner after it, I'm tired to death: fit for nothing. I'll be in Berkeley Square the first thing in the morning, and see what can be done."

"What time? By nine o'clock? Even that may be too late."

"I'll be there by eight."

"You won't fail me, Henry?" she said in an imploring tone.

"I will not fail you, Grace. And I'll get Baumgarten out of the mess if I can, for I like him. Good-night!"

Lady Grace returned home. She was entering the drawing-room, when the butler, Moore, came suddenly out of it to meet her, and in a very unbutlerlike way closed the door in her face to prevent her entrance. His usually florid complexion had turned yellow, and he spoke in a flurry, as if not weighing his words.

"Oh, my lady—not in there, please."

Lady Grace wondered if Moore had been visiting the decanters. "Open the door," she calmly said "Is the dean there still?"

But Moore held the handle firmly. "I beg your pardon, my lady, you must not go in."

She was alarmed now: she saw the man's agitation. "My lady, the dean is taken ill," continued Moore, "that's the truth. I thought your ladyship had best not see him."

She waved him aside in her wilful manner: he would have had to give way. But at that moment the door was opened from within and Cyras came out. He had just got back from Oxford, and it was his arrival which had brought about the discovery that something was amiss with the dean.

"I am going for a doctor, mamma," said Cyras, and leaped away. Lady Grace went in, and Moore followed her.

Leaning back in a low easy-chair, almost at full length, his head resting on the back of it, lay the dean. His face was white, his mouth was open, but his eyes were closed, as if in a calm sleep. Nevertheless, there was that in his face which struck terror to the heart of his wife. She touched the faithful old servant on the arm and cried aloud.

"Yes, my lady," he whispered, believing that she saw as well as he: "I fear it is death."

Lady Grace knelt down and clasped her hands round her husband. In that moment of distress, what cared she who was present? She called him by endearing names, she kissed his face, she besought him to speak to her. But there was no answering response, and conviction told her that there never would be again.

Never in this world. Cyras came back with a doctor; curiously enough, it was Sir William Chant. Sir William had been quietly walking home from a whist-party at a friend's house when Cyras met him.

A small mercy this, for Sir William was able to testify to the cause of death, thereby avoiding an inquest.

The dean had died from disease of the heart, brought on by the evening's excitement. And the world, next day, was busy with the news that the Very Reverend Ryle Baumgarten had been gathered to his fathers, and that the rich Deanery of Denham, richer in those days than in these, was in the clerical market.

## CHAPTER IX.

### MISS DYNEVOR AND THE GIRLS.

It was not an ordinary match; it was something quite out of the common way; but Mary Dynevor was a girl out of the common way also. Not, however, as regarded beauty: in that respect she could not compete with her sister, Grace, or with her brilliant friend, Gertrude Baumgarten. She was a ladylike girl, with a pale serene face, very much like that of her sister, Cyrilla, whose love had been blighted; her hair was of a rich brown, her eyes were violet blue; she was quiet in manner and calm in speech. That was the best that could be said of her, and yet it was certain that some unusual charm did attach itself to Mary Dynevor.

In the past year, when abroad with Lady Grace Baumgarten, Mary had made the acquaintance of Everard Wilmot, an attaché to one of the Continental embassies, and the son of Sir John Wilmot. Exceedingly to her own surprise he had asked her to become his wife. In the impulse of the moment she went,

letter in hand—for he had made the offer in writing—to Lady Grace.

"What am I to do?" she asked.

"What a fortunate girl you are!" exclaimed Lady Grace, when she had digested its contents. "He is the eldest son, you know, and old Sir John's worth twenty thousand a-year, if he's worth a shilling. What news for your father!"

"Then you think that—I—should—accept him?" repeated Mary Dynevor.

"Accept him!" retorted Lady Grace; "why, what else would you do?"

"I don't know. I don't particularly care for him."

"What a strange girl you are! You do not like any one else, I conclude?"

"Oh dear, no," returned Mary; "what an idea!" But the idea had served to bring up the deepest and most confusing blushes to her face. They looked a little suggestive to Lady Grace Baumgarten.

"But—before accepting an offer of this kind, I thought it was necessary—or usual—to—to——" Mary broke down.

Lady Grace burst into a merry laugh. "You thought it was necessary first of all to fall in love. I see. Well, it is sometimes done, Mary; but it is not absolutely essential. My opinion was that something was impending, for Everard has been here much."

"But I never imagined he came for me."

"Oh, indeed!" said Lady Grace, not choosing to say that she herself had never imagined it either. "For whom, then, did you think he came?"

Another accession of colour, and a slightly evasive tone. "Not for any one—of course, I had no definite thoughts upon the subject."

"One word, Mary. Do you dislike Mr. Wilmot?"

"I like him very much; and I esteem him greatly."

"And yet you come to me, and demurely say, 'What am I to do?' Go away with you, you shy, foolish girl."

So Mary accepted Mr. Wilmot. Nevertheless, she felt half-conscious that if she had had the courage to search out the hidden secrets of her heart, it might have told her that her love was given to Charles Baumgarten.

Some few years had elapsed since the sudden death of the Dean of Denham. It was a terrible shock, that, to his wife and children. His affairs were arranged by the help of Lord Avon; Cyras and Charles both doing also something towards it. A small sum of money, left to the boys by a relative, but of which the dean had enjoyed the interest for his life, they had at once sacrificed. Cyras had returned to New Zealand. He was still in the same shipping-house there, Brice and Jansen's, and held a good position in it now. He

had not visited England a second time, but wrote occasionally. Sometimes his letters would contain a pretty-looking little cheque for Charles or for Gertrude.

Charles had done well at Oxford; had taken honours and gained his fellowship. He was called to the Bar, and lived at his chambers in Pump Court for economy's sake; now and then staying for a few days with his mother in Berkeley Square, Lady Grace's residence. Her income was small. She had only two thousand a-year of her own, which would go to Charles and Gertrude in equal shares at her death; but Lord Avon considerably augmented it. He had been a good brother to her. Charles hoped to get on well in his profession in time, and had taken to go circuit; this would be his second year of it.

It was February by the calendar. Judging by the wind, one might have called it March, for dust whirled in the streets and windows rattled. But Miss Dynevor's drawing-room in Eaton Place was cheerful with its fire and wax-lights. Dr. Dynevor was rather in the habit of calling it "My town house" when speaking of it, but it was his sister's and not his. His name was really Maude-Dynevor, though he was rarely called by it. Some people dropped the one name and some dropped the other. His wife's family name was Maude, and when he married her he had had to take it in addition to his own.

When Dr. Baumgarten was made Dean of Denham, Dr. Maude-Dynevor was one of the prebendaries of the same cathedral. The word "prebend," or "prebendary," was then almost universally used for the higher cathedral dignitaries; "canon" rarely. Two or three years later Dr. Dynevor was made prebendary of Oldchurch, and quitted Denham. He was at Oldchurch still, its sub-dean. He had a large family of boys and girls, and ruled them with an iron hand. He was a dark, stern, ugly man, who walked with his head thrown back in haughty pomposity and his perky nose turned up to the air. Caroline, his second daughter, had married a man very much older than herself, Colonel Sir Thomas Hume, and was in India; but the doctor had four daughters on his hands still. The eldest of them, Cyrilla, rarely came to town.

Perhaps, though, it may be said that they were on Miss Dynevor's hands rather than on his. She had all the trouble of them. Since Mrs. Maude-Dynevor's death some years back, his sister had taken much charge of them. Occasionally she was with them at Oldchurch, more frequently they were with her in London. The girls were not at all grateful. Ann Esther Dynevor was rather eccentric and wore a flaxen wig, and her nieces took advantage of her peculiarities to tease her. She was a rich woman and very generous to them.

When Lady Grace Baumgarten returned from her visit to the Continent in the past October, and resigned his daughter Mary into Dr. Dynevor's charge—he had travelled from Oldchurch to Eaton Place to receive her—and laid before him Mr. Wilmot's very handsome proposals, the sub-dean was intensely gratified, and expressed obligation and satisfaction to Lady Grace. Mary and her sisters, Regina and Grace, had remained that winter with their aunt. With February changes had come. Sir John Wilmot was dead, Sir Everard was on his road home, and Dr. Dynevor came up from Oldchurch and was in Eaton Place. According to the sub-dean's computation, Wilmot might be in London now. He was anxious to see his future son-in-law. In his private opinion he set him down as a milksop. Who else, with a title and good rent-roll, would have been attracted by Mary, a quiet, pale girl with nothing in her? The canon was not complimentary to his daughters, either in public or private, and was given to underrating their merits.

Dinner was over, and all were in the drawing-room except the sub-dean. He was fond of his port-wine, and did not quit the table with the young and frivolous. On one of the large old-fashioned sofas sat Miss Dynevor in her flaxen wig; her head had drooped on to the sofa pillow, and she was fast asleep. On another sofa sat the three girls in a half-circle; and perched

on one of its arms was their brother Richard; on the other arm sat the young man who had dined with them.

This was Charles Baumgarten. Nearly six-and-twenty years of age, not very tall, but stately and handsome, he was the very image of what his father had been as a young man; not resembling his sister Gertrude, not resembling his mother, Lady Grace; only his dead father. Richard Dynevor was little and insignificant.

The sub-dean's sons were the plague of his life. Not that they were worse than other sons, but there were several of them to get on in life, and the dean was poor; and to supply their wants was often an inconvenience to him. Richard was studying for the Bar, but was not yet called to it. He had wanted to go into the Church; but the sub-dean had two sons in it, or going into it, and would not put in a third.

"Isn't it a shame!" suddenly exclaimed Regina Dynevor in the subdued tone they had adopted for their conversation. "She says her limbs are getting bad again, and that she can't chaperon us to-morrow night!"

"Regina!" interposed Grace, in a tone of sharp reproof, although Regina was the eldest and she was the youngest.

"I declare that she said it," returned Regina, the

whole party having imperceptibly glanced at the opposite sofa, so that there could be no mistaking who was alluded to. "We were in her dressing-room, just before dinner. 'My limbs are getting bad again:' those were the very words she used."

"Very possibly; but there was no necessity for you to repeat them. We are not alone."

"We are," said Regina. "Who's Charley Baumgarten? Nobody."

"Nobody, as you say," interposed Charles.

"Regina's tongue will be the bane of her life," cried Grace. "Of course we are used to Charley, but it would have been all the same had there been a roomful of strangers present. She says anything that comes uppermost in her mind."

"Like papa," carelessly spoke Regina.

"Yes; but what is proper for papa is unladylike for you," returned Grace, who liked to set the world to rights.

"Go on, Gracie," laughed Richard; "keep them in order. What else did Aunt Ann say?"

"Nothing. I hope it's not true, though, that she is going to be ill. We shall all be kept prisoners, as we were last season."

"I'd rather run away than put up with it," protested Regina fiercely. "It's not rheumatism, but temper, from which she is suffering."

Charles Baumgarten laughed.

"It is quite true, Charley; even you don't know her yet. I protest that it was half-and-half last year —a little rheumatism and a great deal of cross-grained temper. If she does have this attack, mind, I shall have brought it on."

"You! What next, Regina?"

"Little Archdeacon Duck called this morning——"

"Archdeacon Duck—who is he?" interrupted Charles Baumgarten.

"It's the girls' name for him; she means Archdeacon Drake," explained Richard. "Let her go on, Charley."

"Well," said Regina, "you all know how Aunt Ann has been setting her cap at him, thinking, perhaps, he might convert her into Mrs. Duck the second. The little archdeacon was beginning with his foolishly complimentary speeches—it's my belief he learns them by heart, and says them to every woman he meets—and brought in something about aunt's 'locks, of which the weather, windy or wet, never disturbed the beauty.' 'Or if it does,' I put in, 'Aunt Ann Esther can send them to the hairdresser to be renewed; she is more fortunate than we poor young damsels.'"

"Regina! you never said it!"

"Indeed I did. She looked daggers, and the arch-

deacon looked foolish. There's nothing she hates so much either as being called Ann Esther. I was determined to pay her off," avowed Regina; "she had driven me wild all the morning with her aggravations. And now I expect she intends to pay us off by having an attack of rheumatism."

"A blessed thing for you girls, if you were married and away," said Richard, cynically; "but you'll never find another Aunt Ann. I don't know where I should be for pocket-money without her. I say, girls, I think Wilmot has landed."

"Then, if so, he'll be here to-night," said Regina. "And Mary is as cool over it as a cucumber! One would think——"

The sub-dean entered. Regina cut short her speech, and Charles Baumgarten slipped from his perch on the sofa and took his seat decently in a chair. In the presence of Dr. Dynevor his family put on their best behaviour. He walked up to the fire, and stood with his back to it, his shoe buckles glittering in the wax-lights. A dead silence had fallen in the room; Miss Dynevor dozed on, and in the midst of it the arrival of a visitor was heard.

Whether they felt who it might be cannot be told; the silence of expectation was on all, and their eyes turned to the door as it was thrown open.

"Sir Everard Wilmot."

Dr. Dynevor and his buckles bustled forward with his right hand stretched out. He had pictured to himself a foolish young man, with an incipient moustache and an eyeglass; he saw before him a right noble-looking form, with a noble face, a man who had left thirty years behind him. Miss Dynevor tumbled upright in consternation, and pushed up her flaxen curls too high in her flurry.

A warm greeting to the sub-dean, a quiet greeting to Mary, holding her hand for a moment only, an introduction to the rest of the party, including Charles Baumgarten, and then Sir Everard sat down.

"Look at Mary," whispered Richard to his sister Regina. "Is she fainting?"

Regina started up and turned to her. Mary's whole frame was shivering, and her face had turned of a deathlike whiteness. But she was not fainting.

"It will be over in a moment," she murmured to Regina. "Don't notice me, for the love of Heaven! Talk to them—do anything—stand before me—draw attention from me." And soon the colour came into her face again.

"Catch me turning sick and faint for the dearest lover that ever stepped!" thought Regina, as she began rattling the teacups on the table, sharply inquiring how her aunt's legs felt now, and pushed Charles Baumgarten towards the bell-rope, telling

him to ring for the urn; all with the good intention of keeping observation from Mary.

"Perhaps you would prefer coffee, Sir Everard?"

He smiled. "I should prefer tea. I long to fall into the good old English customs again. A traveller on the sandy desert never longed for the sight of water more than I have these many months longed for home."

"Then why didn't you come to it?" sensibly questioned Regina.

"First of all, I could not be spared, and was forced to remain at my post," replied Sir Everard. "Secondly, my father was with me, and he believed England would not be the proper climate for his declining health. We all have to bow to circumstances, you know, Miss Dynevor."

"Very disagreeable circumstances too, sometimes," returned the young lady. "But, Sir Everard, I am not Miss Dynevor, and you will incur my aunt's everlasting displeasure if you accord me the honour of the title. She is Miss Dynevor—at present—and I am Miss Regina."

There was a shade of malice and so much point in Regina's last sentence that some of them smothered a titter. Sir Everard turned to Miss Dynevor, and entered into conversation with her with marked courtesy.

"Dear Aunt Ann is a great sufferer," cried Regina. "She has rheumatism in her legs."

"A pity but that you had it in your tongue," returned Miss Dynevor, provoked into a retort; and Dr. Dynevor wheeled round and stared in anger at his daughter Regina.

"So you are growing tired of a Continental life," he observed to Sir Everard. "I never was abroad; don't know what it is like over there."

"We grow tired in time of all things but home, sir. I hope never to go abroad again—except for a temporary sojourn."

"Mary came home enraptured with Germany," exclaimed Grace Dynevor. "To hear her account of it, we thought she could only have alighted in some terrestrial paradise."

Sir Everard glanced at Mary and half smiled. A sudden flush suffused her white face, and she looked terribly embarrassed.

After tea they dispersed about the two rooms, which opened to each other. One of the girls sat down to the piano, the others gathered round it, leaving the sub-dean and Sir Everard alone, standing on the hearthrug.

"My daughters delight in having a little fling at their aunt, especially Regina," he began confidentially, as if he deemed their behaviour needed an apology

"Ann keeps them rather strictly, and they rebel against it. Richard, too, and Charley Baumgarten help to keep up the ball against her, I fancy."

"He is the son of Lady Grace, I presume?"

"Her son, and her idol."

"He is a fine young man—has a particularly nice countenance."

"I don't know that countenances go for much," remarked the reverend doctor. "Charles has something in him, and is steady as old Time. He did well at college, and gained his fellowship."

"Does he follow a profession?" inquired Sir Everard. "Lady Grace used to talk to me about him, but I really have forgotten details."

"I don't know how he would expect to get on in the world without a profession. Dean Baumgarten died worse than poor, as you may have heard. Charles is called to the Bar, and is already getting into some practice."

"There's an elder son, is there not?"

"Of the dean's, yes; not of Lady Grace's. The dean was married twice. Cyras lives at Wellington, in New Zealand; he has not been in England for years."

"*Cyras!*" exclaimed Sir Everard, with emphasis. "Is that his name? And he lives, you say, at Wellington? Is he in a shipping-house there—Brice and Jansen's?"

"I believe that is the firm," replied the sub-dean, haughtily, who would have thought it beneath him to know well the name of any one in trade.

"Then I must have made a passing acquaintance with him when I was at Wellington two or three years ago," remarked Sir Everard. "But I thought his name was Brice. I am sure he called Mr. Brice 'uncle.'"

"Not unlikely; they are connected in some way. But his name is Cyras Baumgarten."

Sir Everard strolled towards the other room. Mary sat on a sofa, apparently lost in thought, and Charles Baumgarten stood underneath the chandelier, with an open book. Sir Everard sat down by Mary.

"It has been a long separation, Mary," he whispered. "Did you think I was never coming?"

"Yes; it has been long," she faintly said. Her hands were trembling, her heart was beating; she spoke—and looked—as if she were frightened.

"But from no fault of mine," he returned. "Had you permitted a regular correspondence you would have known this."

"My aunt said it was more proper not to correspond—except by an occasional letter at stated seasons. I explained this to you after I returned."

A smile passed across Sir Everard's face. "I am aware—I remember; and I dare say it has all been

very 'proper' if not affectionate. But the past is over and gone, Mary, and now we need fear no further——"

He did not say what. A hasty glance had shown him that no one was looking. Charles Baumgarten, buried in his book, stood with his back towards them; the rest were round the piano, singing. He bent his face down to Mary's, and his lips touched her cheek.

"Oh, don't! don't!" she shrinkingly uttered.

"Nay, my dearest, would you deny it to me? It is a reward long waited for."

She gasped for breath as she stood up and caught the corner of the mantelpiece. Her face had turned painfully white again.

The song over, the conversation became general, and presently Sir Everard rose to leave.

"Will you tell Lady Grace, with my kind regards, that I anticipate the pleasure of seeing her to-morrow?" said Sir Everard to Charles, as he held out his hand.

Charles did not choose to see the hand, and he replied, coldly and stiffly, "I do not reside with Lady Grace, and shall not be likely to meet her to-night or to-morrow."

"He has his mother's pride," thought Sir Everard. But Sir Everard was mistaken.

Mary slipped out of the room afterwards, and she had not returned to it when Charles said good-night.

As he passed a small parlour on his way out, usually devoted to the studies and pursuits of the young ladies, Charles's ear caught the sound of something very like a sob. He halted and looked in. There were no candles in the room, but the fire was blazing away, and in its light stood Mary. He went in and shut the door behind him. She smoothed the traces of tears from her face, but could not hide its ghastly look. Charles turned white also, and confronted her upon the old, worn hearthrug.

"The time for concealment has passed, Mary, as it seems to me," he began. "We have gone on, like two children, making believe to hide things from one another. This is the awaking! What is to be done? You cannot enact a lie, and marry that man!"

"Oh, Charles! what are you saying?" she uttered, in a wailing tone.

He stood quite still for a moment, looking at her. "Do you wish to marry him?"

"I would rather die."

"Yes, for you love me—nay, don't I tell you the time for concealment is over, and this night is the awaking. You love me—and oh, my darling! how I love you I cannot stay now to tell. Nor need I; for you have known it without my telling you."

"I am terrified," she whispered. "I am nearly terrified to death at the thought of what is before me. Think of the wrong I have done to him!"

"And I think of my position—my poverty," returned Charles Baumgarten. "If I spoke to your father he would turn me out of the house and keep me out of it. We have just gone on living in a fool's paradise, Mary, shutting our eyes to the future, I shutting mine to honour."

"Not a word must be breathed to my father," she whispered eagerly.

"Would you marry Everard Wilmot?" sharply cried Charles Baumgarten. "But that I forced control upon myself with an iron will, I should have struck him when he kissed you to-night."

She cried out with pain. "You saw it, then?"

"Saw it! I felt it. Felt it as if it had been a sharp steel piercing my heart. Oh, the curse of poverty! I seem to be helpless in the matter. Mary, I can only trust in you."

"A dim idea came over me, while I sat with him on the sofa, of speaking to him," she said in a tone of abstraction. "But I don't know how I could do it. He is so good a man, so honourable, so kindly; one of those men you may trust. I wish he had never taken it in his head to ask me to marry him! I wish I had followed my own impulse at the time and declined him."

"Why did you not do so?" he returned.

"I had not the courage, and I—did not care for you so much then as I do now," she whispered.

"We have nearly our whole lives before us, Mary, and they must not be sacrificed to misery," he urged. "Mary, you must wait for me; I know I shall get on."

"Leave me to think it over for to-night," she answered. "I must try and see what ought to be done—and do it."

"That will not do," he impetuously said. "If you put it upon 'duty' and that sort of thing, you will marry him."

"Charles!" It was her turn to reprove now. "I said I would try and see what I ought to do, meaning my duty, neither more nor less. It is not my duty to marry where I do not love."

"Mary, I beg your pardon. All this has driven me half out of my mind."

"Leave me now," she repeated. "Indeed, I tremble lest any of them should come and find you here. Good-night."

He put his arm round her to kiss her, but she started away. "Charles! at present, remember, I am engaged to *him*."

It was of no use. "I must take away the one that he left," whispered Charles Baumgarten.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SUB-DEAN.

MARY DYNEVOR lay awake the whole night, thinking over what she ought to do, as she had expressed it. To her father she could not speak: she dared not do so; his temper was fiery, his authority absolute; she was utterly in awe of him. And to speak to him would be utterly useless—nay, worse than useless; for at the slightest hint of reluctance on her part he would have forced the marriage on.

No; if broken off at all it must be done without the knowledge of Dr. Dynevor. She could only see one way out of the dilemma—to throw herself on the generosity of Sir Everard; but she shrank from the prospect of doing this, and when she rose in the morning she was as much perplexed as when she had gone to rest.

But every hour of indecision only added to the difficulty. Sir Everard would be coming again in the course of the day to see her, his promised bride. What

was to be done must be done without delay. Miss Dynevor announced herself better, and said that she should chaperon her nieces to the evening's engagement, which they had been afraid of missing. They were speaking of it when Sir Everard called in the afternoon.

"We can get you a card also, Sir Everard," spoke up Miss Dynevor. "The Laysons will be delighted to see you."

"You are very kind. I fear I must decline. Just yet I do not wish to join in any gaiety," was his answer.

A thought occurred to Mary, and she nerved herself to its execution—if she could only find the chance of doing so. It came to her when they were standing together at the window, their backs to the room.

"I have a favour to ask of you," she whispered tremulously. "It is not my intention to go out to-night: will you come here and spend a quiet half-hour with me?"

"Thank you, Mary. I will come."

"Do not mistake me," she hurriedly added. "I *must* speak with you alone; and it is the best opportunity I shall have, as far as I can see."

The sub-dean was engaged that evening to a clerical dinner, and Miss Dynevor departed with her nieces at the appointed hour, all three much surprised at Mary's

suddenly proclaimed resolution of remaining at home. They had scarcely gone when Sir Everard Wilmot entered. And now came Mary's task.

She did not know how to begin it. She was absent and agitated. Sir Everard could not fail to observe her strangeness of manner. "What is the matter?" he inquired.

A strange wild rush of red illumined her cheek, and she clasped her hands tightly one over the other; so tightly as to cause pain had her mind been at ease; then she got up and stood by the fire: all in the effort to nerve herself to her task—it must be done. Now or never.

"I have a communication to make to you, Sir Everard——"

"*Sir* Everard!" he interrupted, standing near her.

"And I don't know how to do it," she continued, unmindful of the reproof. "Had you been any other than—than—what you are, I could not have made it."

He did not speak now. He glanced at her shrinking air, her downcast face, her nervous hands, and waited to hear more.

"I have been very wicked, very wrong. I have let things go on, suffering you to believe that I would—that I was going to marry you; and I find I cannot do so."

A dead pause. Sir Everard thought that he had never seen any one so confused, so painfully agitated. "I do not understand you," he said. "But I think you had better sit down," he added gently, leading her to the sofa, on which he took a place beside her.

"It is your coming home which has awakened me," she continued, scarcely knowing what she spoke. "Indeed, I did not mean to do wrong, or to act dishonourably; but when you came yesterday evening—then—I found—that I could not marry you."

Sir Everard thought it a singular avowal—especially singular as made to him.

"Let me tell you all," she resumed, gathering some courge now the ice was broken, as nervously sensitive people will do. "I found I did not love you; that it would be wrong to myself, and doubly, doubly wrong to you, if I fulfilled my engagement and married you; and I lay awake all night, thinking what ought to be my course. I did not dare tell papa; he is very severe, he would not have listened to me; and I—decided to—tell you; to ask you to give me up. It is what I am now trying to ask you to do."

She sat now with her hands clasped before her, looking down at them, a sort of helpless look upon her face. Sir Everard was silent.

"I knew how good you were, how considerate, how honourable, and it gave me courage to speak to your-

self, to show you my unfortunate position, and to ask you to be generous, and let the refusal to carry out the marriage come from you. Oh, Sir Edward," she added, bursting into tears, "I do like and esteem you very much; and it nearly breaks my heart to have to say this."

"You must forgive me if I repeat that I do not understand you," he said in low, kind tones, "and your last words less than all. You 'like and esteem me,' but you do not love me? I am quite content to take the esteem and the liking, Mary; to trust that the love will follow."

"It never will," she almost vehemently answered, lifting her eyes to his for a moment in her eagerness. "It cannot do so."

Another pause: her face was bent again, and she had turned crimson to the roots of her hair. A light dawned upon the baronet.

"You love another!"

"Oh, forgive me," she whispered. "It was not willingly done; it seems to have come on without my having been aware of it. He did not know it either —until last night when you came. At least—at least —he had never spoken of it."

"You have betrayed yourself—I suspect unwittingly. You speak of Mr. Baumgarten?"

She had indeed betrayed herself, and certainly

not intentionally. It did not tend to reassure her.

"Why did you accept me?" asked Sir Everard.

"Why, indeed!" she murmured. "But I did not know that I was doing wrong. I liked you very much; I admired and respected you; you were so different, so superior to the frivolous men we mostly meet. It is true I did not love you, and even then I knew that I liked—only liked, mind—Charles Baumgarten; but I thought it would all come right in the future. I was acting in a species of dream or bewilderment, which was the effect your offer had upon me. I had taken a wrong view of your frequent visits to us—you see I am telling you all—and that alone would have kept me from caring for you in a different way had there been no other impediment."

"What wrong view had you taken up?" inquired Sir Everard.

She hesitated for a moment, and then spoke in a low tone. "I fancied you came for the sake of Gertrude Baumgarten."

"Gertrude Baumgarten!" he repeated in a curious intonation. "Gertrude would not have cared for me."

"Gertrude *would*—as I truly believe now."

"Nonsense, Mary! Gertrude Baumgarten was wrapt in that Italian prince, who had more money than brains."

Mary shook her head. "She did not care for him; and when he asked her to be his wife she refused, and felt surprise, I think, at his proposal. After it was all over—I mean when I had accepted you and we were away, and on our return home again—an idea came over me that it was you Gertrude had really cared for. I was not sure, and I judged it better not to continue the train of thought; but this I know, Gertrude has never been quite the same girl since. I suppose I ought not to tell you this; I fear I am forgetting myself in more ways than one.

"Everard Wilmot paused. "Do you know, Mary," he said, "that this communication in regard to yourself places me in a very painful position?"

"I can only throw myself upon your generosity; only plead for your forgiveness."

"Putting aside the question of my private feelings, you place me in a most embarrassing and painful position towards Dr. Dynevor. He expects that I have come home to marry his daughter; I expected it; the world expects it; and what can be my excuse for refusing? Can I go to him, hat in hand, and say, 'Sir, I am tired of your daughter; I do not intend to marry her?'"

She caught up the silk flounce of her evening dress, and rolled it about in thought as she spoke. "How can it be managed? what can be done? Oh, Sir

Everard, can you think of no plan? You are so much wiser than I."

"You seem to assume confidently that I must consent to the breaking up of my cherished plans—to summarily resigning my promised wife."

She looked very much distressed. "What *can* I do? Can I marry you, liking some one else?"

"Having promised to be my wife, was it right that you should cultivate so much the society of Mr. Baumgarten?"

"You do not understand," she hastily said. "It was not right; but you do not quite understand. We have always been very intimate with the Baumgartens; my youngest sister was named after Lady Grace, and Charles has come here as freely as our own brothers have come. I did not think of any danger, I don't think Charles did; it is your coming home which has shown us the truth."

"You wish me to understand that you and Mr. Baumgarten are irrevocably attached to one another?"

There was a risk of the flounce being pulled into shreds, and Sir Everard scarcely caught the confirmative answer.

"Then will it not be better to tell the simple truth to Dr. Dynevor? I do not suggest this to avert unpleasantness to myself, but——"

"It is the very thing that must not be done," she

interrupted, in agitation. "Charles Baumgarten is as yet too poor to ask for me, and papa would go wild at the bare idea of it. He of course considers it a most desirable thing—oh pardon me for having to say all this—that I should—should—become Lady Wilmot, and I dare not tell him I object. I thought if you could do it—as if the objection came from you—you would not be afraid of him, for he could not be harsh and peremptory with you, as he would be with me. I know it is a great boon to ask of you," she added, her eyes filling again, "but—if you knew how unhappy, how perplexed I am—perhaps you would not refuse to help me."

"You forget one thing," he returned in a low tone: "that the odium of being refused had far better fall upon me than upon you. The world is not generous in these matters, but I can fight it better than you can."

"I forget all things," she answered, "but the bare fact before me—that I must not marry you, and dare not confess to papa the true cause. The world can only say that you repented of your engagement to me. Let it do so."

Sir Everard was silent. He knew that the world's ability to say it would not prove so pleasant as she thought. "I must have time to consider this," he said, rising. "I will see you again to-morrow morning."

She rose also, and stood before him as a culprit. He took her hand. "I hope you will forgive me; I hope you did not like me very much," she whispered, raising her repentant eyes to his.

Her words and manner almost amused him, they were so truthful and childlike. "I do like you very much," he answered, with a smile; "too much to part from you without a pang of regret and mortification."

"But you will get over it," she eagerly said. "Very soon, I hope."

"It will be the second case of a similar nature I have had to get over," he returned, possibly surprised out of the confession, possibly making it with deliberate intention. "I was going to be married in my early youth, or what seems early youth to me now. I was four-and-twenty."

"And she refused you?" whispered Mary.

"No; she died. All the love I had to give died with her, and I had only liking left for any one else. I had none even of that for a long while, for years after she died. 'Wilmot never means to marry,' people used to say; 'he must have taken a vow of hatred against women.' They little thought he had once loved one too much. Do not be ungenerous, and fancy I retort this confession upon you in requital for the one you have given me; it was always my inten-

tion to make it before we were married, more fully than I have now done."

Mary Dynevor's face was raised; her lips were parted with eagerness. "Then—if I understand you rightly—you have not really loved me?"

"In the imaginative sense of the term—no. Only—I quote your favourite words—liked you very much. But my wife should never have felt the want of that ideal love."

She looked almost beside herself with joy. A rosy flush suffused her cheeks, a light came to her eyes, and she positively clasped Sir Everard's hands in her own. "I am so thankful!" she burst forth, "I am so happy! If you do not love me, why, no great harm has been done, and we can still be friends. Oh, Everard, let us be friends. There is no one in the world I would rather have for a friend than you; and you will be Charles's friend also, and let him be yours."

"Perhaps—after a little while."

"Yes; after a little while. As soon as you can; as soon as you can forget my ingratitude and ill-doing. I know I have behaved badly, and I do beg your pardon. I am very happy, and shall now say to myself over and over again, 'It is not all over and done with; we shall still be friends.'"

He fully understood what she meant to imply,

though it was not expressed in the most lucid manner. As a candid child, she had spoken out her mind unreservedly, and Sir Everard went away, regretting that this candour was not inherent in all girls.

The revelation she had made to him inflicted no deep wound. When a man or a woman has gone through the phases of the passion called "love," and survived it, deep wounds are over. A strangely bright dream while it lasts; sweet, pure, heavenly; far too much so for this earth, to all else of which it stands in contrast. Few men—or women either—are organized to experience it; *their* love is not this love, and let them be glad that it is not. It had done its work on Everard Wilmot, and had gone; quite, completely gone, scarcely leaving its remembrance; but it had taken with it the inward springs of imaginative existence; poetry, ideality, pure passion; all that stands in contradistinction to hard reality. Henceforth he could make the best of this matter-of-fact, work-a-day world, and strive on for the next, but he knew that there was no more life for his heart, no more thrill, no more hope, no more satisfying happiness. No, no; deep wounds were over for Sir Everard. The song had left the bird.

What does Byron, that great master of the heart's life, tell us in one of his poems? Have you forgotten it?

"But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,
Is first and passionate love—it stands alone,
Like Adam's recollection of his fall;
The tree of knowledge has been plucked—all's known—
And life needs nothing further to recall
Worthy of this ambrosial sin, so shown,
No doubt in fable, as the unforgiven
Fire which Prometheus filch'd for us from Heaven."

Surely yes! Nothing in this world, but that alone, can impart any idea of what Heaven's bliss will be.

Beyond that confession of his own past life, Sir Everard could have made another had he chosen to do so—that his second essay in love, the "liking," had not been given to Mary Dynevor but to Gertrude Baumgarten. He met Gertrude for the first time when she was on the Continent with her mother. He was strangely attracted to her; and he took to frequenting the house of Lady Grace.

One evening he spoke to Gertrude. Or, it may rather be said, that he hinted he should like to speak. She stopped him at the outset, scorn on her beautiful face, resentment in her voice, as she bade him be silent and not so speak to her again. Sir Everard bowed and obeyed. But the wish to settle down, to have a home and a wife in it, was strong upon him. As a Frenchman says, "Je vais me ranger," so said Everard Wilmot; and, while smarting under Gertrude's rather premature refusal, he wrote to ask for the hand of Mary Dynevor.

Therefore, as the reader will readily perceive, this confession of Mary's did not carry a great sting with it; and Sir Everard was enabled to consider with calmness what kind of communication might be made to the formidable canon.

On the following day, after breakfast, Sir Everard called at Eaton Place. He saw Mary, and went straight from her presence to that of Dr. Dynevor. There, after shaking hands, he quietly said that differences had arisen between himself and Miss Mary, and they had mutually agreed to part.

Never, perhaps, was a canon so astounded, never did one feel more outraged, and—if we may venture to say it of a divine coveting in all his heart a deanery —never was one in a greater passion, though he controlled it.

"What was the cause?" he demanded.

The precise cause he and Miss Mary Dynevor had agreed to keep to themselves, was the answer of the baronet. It was sufficient to say that they were both fully convinced a union between them would not conduce to their happiness, and they had come to the conclusion not to carry it out.

Sir Everard said as little as he could and left, and then up rose the fiery Dynevor wrath. It was let loose on the family in conclave: Miss Dynevor, Regina, Mary, and Grace. What the sub-dean said in his

passion is of no consequence, and if he might have been fined (had he been before a magistrate) a few small sums of five shillings each, we won't transcribe the fact, out of respect to the feelings of any other sub-dean who may chance to read this. Miss Dynevor and two of her nieces were simply confounded, not so much at the ebullition of anger as at its cause; Mary could only shiver in silence, and inwardly pray that it might pass away.

"I will know the truth," foamed the canon. "Why do you part?"

"Differences," gasped Mary, who had taken her cue from Sir Everard.

"Differences be—be—forgotten!" stammered his reverence. "What differences?"

"Nothing that I can particularly explain," faintly returned Mary. "We found that a marriage between us would not lead to happiness, and we parted."

"*Won't* you speak out?" cried he, bringing down his clerical shoe upon the carpet.

"That is all I have to say," she answered, drooping her head.

"I am to understand, then, that Sir Everard Wilmot declines to carry out the engagement?"

"Yes." She had slightly hesitated at the answer, but it appeared to her that she must give it, for want of a better.

"Very well," cried Dr. Dynevor, as he quitted the room and shut himself into his study.

This gave Miss Dynevor and the girls an opportunity of inquiring on their own account. Question after question they poured out on the unhappy Mary, but they did not succeed in getting from her any solution to the mystery, which, of course, bore an ill appearance.

"I very much fear it is a case of jilting," groaned Aunt Ann. "If the days of duelling were not past, one of your brothers ought to go out and shoot Everard Wilmot. Dishonourable craven!"

Mary's cheeks burnt. The "jilting" had been on her side, not his; and it was great pain to hear this epithet applied to one so generous and upright.

Miss Dynevor's anger, however, could do neither harm nor good; but, unfortunately, Dr. Dynevor's could, and he had adopted precisely similar sentiments in regard to Sir Everard. It did not occur to him to surmise that a young lady who had waited hopefully (as he concluded) for the return of her bridegroom to claim her would be likely to refuse him as soon as he appeared, therefore he laid all the blame at his door and not hers. A very few days, and then—something like a thunder-clap burst forth on Mary. Her father was entering an action against Sir Everard Wilmot for breach of promise.

"Oh, Aunt Ann," gasped Mary, appearing before Miss Dynevor whiter than a sheet, "what can be done?"

Intensely provoked at the state of affairs altogether, Miss Dynevor declined to say. In point of fact she did not know.

"Has papa *really* entered an action against him?"

"How can I tell what your papa has or has not done?" retorted Aunt Ann. "If he has not done it, he will do it; be sure of that. My brother Richard is the most obstinate man living. Once his mind was set upon a thing when a boy, you couldn't turn him, and I'm sure you can't now."

"But think of the dreadful scandal, Aunt Ann!"

"*You* should tell him to think of that."

The possibility of concealment was all over now, as Mary saw; and she dragged herself, in fear and sickness, to his presence. "Is it true that you have done it?" she gasped; and the sub-dean was at no loss to understand her meaning.

"It soon will be true. The man shall be held up, a spectacle to the world."

"Oh, papa, you must undo it, you must undo it! Do not lose a moment. It was not Sir Everard who broke off the engagement; it was I."

The canon felt rather savage. He had only just come from a pitched battle with Miss Dynevor upon

this very point, his will conflicting with hers. Miss Dynevor was decidedly against the action, and told him it would be derogatory to his daughter and disgraceful to himself. Of course he did not listen to her; he never listened to any one who opposed him; and he believed that his sister had now been sending Mary to him with an assertion that was not true.

"You may go back to your aunt,' said he, "and tell her to mind her own business, and I'll mind mine."

"I did not come at my aunt's instigation, papa. It was from Regina I heard the news; and I have come to you to tell you the truth. It might have been better to tell it you from the first, as Sir Everard wished to do."

The sub-dean stared at her through his great ugly spectacles, for he had been reading a letter when she interrupted him. "What do you mean about 'the truth'?" he sternly asked "What is the truth?"

She laid her arms upon the back of a chair and seemed to lean her weight upon it; he saw that she was trembling. "The truth, papa, is that I refused Sir Everard; so that if an action might be brought on either side it would be on his. He came home to marry me; but I—I—could not marry him, and he was so kind as to let it appear to you that it was as much his fault as mine."

"*You* broke it off? Of your own accord?"

"Yes," she answered.

Dr. Dynevor paused to collect his senses, perhaps his temper. He took his daughter's hand, placed her in a chair, and took up his standing before her, staring right into her face.

"Your reason for doing that, young lady?"

"Oh, papa, I cannot tell you," she said, bursting into tears.

"Your reason?" he repeated. "You do not stir from my presence till you have given it to me."

She was terrified at his stern tone, terrified at what the future might have in store for her, terrified altogether. Better let him know the truth and get it over, a voice seemed to whisper to her. "Papa," she breathed, bending her face down upon the arm of the chair, "I—I liked some one else better than Sir Everard."

"You liked——" The canon stopped; indignation and astonishment overmastered him.

"Who is it?" he demanded, in an awful voice.

She did not answer. What he could see of her face looked as crimson as his own sometimes was. "Who is it, I ask?" he repeated; and shrink and shiver as she would, there was no evading that resolute question.

"Charles Baumgarten."

To attempt to describe the state of feeling of

Richard Dynevor, canon and sub-dean of Oldchurch Cathedral, would be a task beyond any modern pen, for we take stings and checks more soberly now than we used to do. What with his condemning anger, with her aunt's covert reproaches, with the vexation, the suspense, and the distress the affair had brought her, and the knowledge that she and Charles Baumgarten were parted for good, Mary's mind could not bear up against it, and she became seriously ill.

Dr. Dynevor condescended to call upon Everard Wilmot, who had taken up his abode at the residence in Grosvenor Place, formerly his father's house, now his own. The canon was in a frightful state of wrath at the turn affairs had taken, but he was a just man on the whole, and went to retract, in a manner, the reproaches he had bestowed upon Sir Everard.

"I was wholly misled, you see, Wilmot, and I'm sorry I said as much," he began, which was a wonderful concession for him. "Girls capable of acting in the capricious manner my daughter has done ought to be made to smart for it. She took *you* in, of course, as she did me."

"Why, yes, she did," replied Sir Everard. "I'm very sorry for her, sir. I hear she is ill."

"Sorry! Ill!" retorted the indignant canon. "Let me tell you, Sir Everard, if she were ten times as ill as she is she deserves no pity. My opinion is, you

should have kept her to her bargain. However, the time for that is past now."

"Quite so," spoke Sir Everard.

A curt letter, couched in the haughtiest of terms, reached Charles Baumgarten's chambers in Pump Court from Dr. Dynevor, forbidding him all further intercourse with the Dynevor family.

"I know the old boy can do the thing in style when he brings his mind to it, but this is super-extra, Charley," remarked Richard Dynevor, who chanced to call in Pump Court soon after the missive was delivered. "Cheer up, lad; things may take a turn."

It was not from her son Charles that Lady Grace heard the news of the rupture of the engagement, but from Everard Wilmot himself. He called in Berkeley Square, and told her what had occurred.

"The marriage broken off!—not going to take place at all! What can be the reason for this?" cried Lady Grace, fair and handsome as she ever had been in the days gone by.

"We have mutually agreed upon it," he replied.

"But *why* have you done that? There must be some cause for it, Sir Everard."

"I think," he said, lowering his voice, "you had better ask Mary for a reason."

"Then, was it *her* fault?"

"It was not mine. At least, not—not altogether.

Dear Lady Grace, although I have come expressly to tell you this, I do not feel at liberty to speak more fully," he added, in a quicker tone. "I think you will be quite sure to hear the truth from the Dynevors, and then I can be more explicit as regards myself."

"Well, I am very greatly surprised," she said. "But I don't think it appears to have broken your heart."

"Hearts are elastic, and don't break so easily," replied Sir Everard, with a half-smile.

After he left, Lady Grace sat buried in a reverie. Her daughter, who had been out, found her so.

"Mamma," exclaimed the latter, "how serious you look!"

"I was thinking, Gertrude. Everard Wilmot has been here to tell me some news: his engagement to Mary Dynevor is at an end."

"Oh, indeed," said Gertrude, carelessly, but she turned crimson.

"And his manner, as he told me, has set me wondering," continued Lady Grace. "My dear, I don't believe he cares one bit about it; I am inclined to suspect there was not the smallest particle of love in the matter—on either side. Take care! What are you about, Gertrude?—leaning out of the window like that!"

"I was looking at the accident at the corner of the

square; a horse has fallen down," was the composed reply of Gertrude.

And a few weeks passed on.

Mary Dynevor was not dying; no one said that; but every one did say that she was wasting away. The sub-dean, haughty, cold, and implacable, would not see it; Miss Dynevor had begun to speak of it complainingly; Regina and Grace grieved. She had a touch of low fever, and seemed unable to struggle out of it.

Mary chiefly lay upon the sofa; she was too weak to sit up throughout the day. Smarting under the displeasure of her father, obliged to submit to the querulous remarks of her aunt, who rarely ceased to grumble at the rupture of so desirable a marriage, suffering, in a less degree, from the covert reproaches of her sisters, who felt it as a slur upon them, Mary had a sad time of it As to Charles Baumgarten, he had gone on circuit and seemed to be done with for ever. Even Richard never heard from him or of him.

But all this only shows how we estimate things by comparison. Had it not been for the visions opened up by Mary's becoming the wife of Sir Everard, it might not have occurred to Dr. Dynevor to turn up his nose at Charles, nephew of the Earl of Avon, heir

to the half of Lady Grace's fortune, sure to meet with support and to get on at the Bar. Sensible and steady, Charles Baumgarten would have been welcomed for any one of the portionless daughters of the canon. He and Mary might have had to struggle a little at first, but it would all come right in the end, and the sub-dean would have married them himself with pleasure. But under the actual circumstances—Mary's having refused a splendid match that she might throw herself away upon him—of course Charles Baumgarten was nothing less than a *bête noire* in the eyes of the Dynevors—very black indeed to the sub-dean.

"It is of no use, madam, my coming here day after day to see the patient," somewhat testily explained Dr. Lamb, the family physician, one day to Miss Dynevor. "The disorder is on the mind: some trouble, I believe, is weighing upon her. If it cannot be set at rest I can do no good."

"And what then?" asked Miss Dynevor. "If nothing can be done for her mind, what then?"

"Why, you take away the chance of her getting better, and if she does not get better she must get worse; and the result may be—if I may speak plainly—death. It is not in my province to inquire into family secrets," continued the physician; "but it does seem strange that a girl of her age should have any wasting care which cannot be removed."

Miss Dynevor, now very uneasy, sat down to write an epistle—as she invariably called her letters—to the sub-dean, at Oldchurch. She then had a serious talk with Mary; laid aside her crossness for the occasion, and pointed out to her, kindly and rationally, that it was her duty to rouse herself and forget Charles Baumgarten. With the effort to do this forgetfulness might come, and with forgetfulness health would return. Mary burst into tears, and sobbed so long and vehemently that Miss Dynevor was startled, but her reply was that she *would* try to forget him, provided she might be allowed one interview with him, to explain to him that they must finally part.

The epistle had the effect of bringing Dr. Dynevor to town. Though harsh and stern with his children, he was fond of them at heart—just as his sister was—and he did not like to hear that Mary might be in danger of dying. He travelled up by night, reaching Eaton Place in the morning. Breakfast over, he shut himself in with his sister.

"And now, Ann, what do you mean by writing to me as you did?" began he, in his sternest manner. "Calling Mary names—and all the rest of it!"

"Names!" cried Miss Dynevor.

"You said she was dying!"

"I said to you, Richard, what Dr. Lamb said to me.

And I gave you my own opinion—that she had better be allowed to marry Charles Baumgarten."

"I dare say," exclaimed the haughty canon.

"There's not a shade of chance now for Sir Everard Wilmot," went on Miss Dynevor. "It's of no use thinking of *him*. Of course, girls are only born to give a heap of trouble to their family, and for nothing else—as I have remarked to yours, every one of them, over and over again—and they ought not to be given way to under ordinary circumstances. But when it comes to this point, that the girl may be dying, to give way may be nothing less than a duty."

"What next?" asked the sub-dean.

Miss Dynevor took up a screen to shield her face, which always grew unpleasantly pink in argument, and repeated the substance of her conversation with Mary. That she had promised to try to get well, provided she might once more see Charles Baumgarten.

"And did you sanction it?" demanded the sub-dean, turning round fiercely, both hands thrust into his clerical pockets.

"Why, no. I expect you'd have come down upon me pretty sharply, if I had, Richard. I couldn't either, for Charles is on circuit."

"Much good he'll do on that!" growled the sub-dean.

"Time he was back though now, I suppose," added

Miss Dynevor thoughtfully. "It is some weeks since he started on it. Mary wants to be allowed to see him, that they may bid one another adieu for ever."

"Let her see him then, and have done with it," spoke the canon, sharply.

Miss Dynevor was surprised at the concession, but hastened to repeat it to Mary. It made her pale and agitated.

"I shall write a short epistle to his chambers in Pump Court, and let it await him there," said Miss Dynevor. "No doubt he will call here as soon as he reads it."

"Mind, aunt, I must see him alone," said Mary, a strangely heightened colour lighting her wan cheeks.

"You need not fear that any of us will covet to be present; we are not so fond of him," retorted Miss Dynevor.

She sent the "epistle" to Pump Court. It lay there for some little time. Charles's was the Home Circuit; and when its business was over, he turned to Great Whitton to spend a day or two with his mother and sister, who were staying at Avon House. But he lost no time in obeying the summons when he was back in London.

Mary received him alone, as she had wished. She sat back upon the large old-fashioned sofa in the drawing-room, her head supported by a pillow. Charles

was shocked to observe the change in her, and thought she must be dying.

"No," she said to him, after they had spoken for some time, "I am not dying. They think—at least they say—that when once my mind is at rest, when we shall have parted for good, suspense exchanged for certain misery, that I shall begin to get well again. It may be so."

"Mary, they have no right to part us."

"It must be so; it is to be. I cannot act in defiance of my father."

"And you can part from me without an effort!"

"Without an effort?" she repeated. "Look at me, Charles, and then see what it has cost me."

He repented of his hasty words, sat down by her side, and drew her to him. Her head lay passively upon his shoulder; and they had just settled themselves into this most interesting position, when the door opened with a crash, and in marched the sub-dean. Mary's head started back to its pillow; Charles stood up, folded his arms, and looked fearlessly at the intruder.

"So you are here again, sir?"

"By appointment, Dr. Dynevor. And I am grieved to see what I do see. She is surely dying."

"You think so, do you?" cried the canon. "Perhaps you imagine you could save her life?"

"At any rate, I would try to save it, if I were allowed. What is your objection to me, sir?" he hastily added, his tone one of sharp demand. "My connections are unexceptionable; and many a briefless barrister has risen in time to the woolsack."

"I am glad you have the modesty to acknowledge that you are briefless."

"I did not acknowledge it, and I am not briefless," returned Charles. "I have begun to get on."

Dr. Dynevor looked at his daughter. "Would you patronize this sort of 'getting on'?" asked he.

There was a strange meaning in his tone, which struck on Mary's ear. She rose in agitation, her hands clasped. "Papa, I would risk it. Oh, papa, if you would only let me, I would risk it and trust it."

"If you choose to risk it and trust it, you may do so," responded the sub-dean, coolly; "and that is what I have come in to say. But, recollect, I wash my hands of the consequences. When you shall have gathered all kinds of embarrassments about you," he added, turning to Charles, "don't expect that you are to come to me to help you out of them. If you two wish to make simpletons of yourselves and marry, go and do it. But understand that you will do it with your eyes open, Mr. Charles Baumgarten."

The sub-dean strutted out of the room, and

Charles caught the girl to him, for he thought she was fainting.

"How good he is to us!" gasped the young man, in the revulsion of feeling which the decision brought him.

## CHAPTER XI.

### MYSTIFICATION.

Charles Baumgarten sat in his chambers, Pump Court, Temple, enjoying an animated discussion with his friend Jephson, the great Chancery lawyer. About a week had gone by since Charles had come home from circuit, and held that momentous interview with Mary Dynevor which had been broken in upon by the sub-dean. Mary had now gone, with some friends, to Brighton for change of air, and Charles was, so to say, a bachelor at large again. The change from despair to hope had so elated him that he had somewhat rashly likened it to Elysium. For on this morning a matter had occurred not at all in harmony with the ease said to be the portion of the denizens of the Elysian Fields. A certain ugly-looking bill for eighty-one pounds, bearing Charles's acceptance, had been presented to him for payment.

Charles declined to pay it, on the ground that he had not accepted it. He repudiated the bill altogether.

It was held by that eminent legal firm, Godfrey and Herbert Jephson; the latter of whom had now come to Pump Court in person, bringing the bill with him.

"I never saw it in my life until to-day," protested Charles Baumgarten. "You have been imposed upon."

Mr. Jephson laughed. In days gone by, they had been very intimate at the University together, and had there formed a close friendship, though Herbert Jephson was the elder by some years. "Stuff and nonsense!" quoth he; "would you deny your own signature? Look at it."

Charles had looked enough at it, but looked again. "I don't deny that it's a clever imitation, except in one particular. This is signed 'C. Baumgarten.' I always sign 'Charles' in full. Look over my notes to you, Jephson, should you have kept any, and see if I ever signed myself in any other way."

"If you never did it before, that's no reason why you might not have done it on this occasion," was the unanswerable response.

"I have never done it," returned Charles. "Now consider, Jephson. You have known me well for two years; Godfrey knows me. Do you think it likely that I would repudiate a bill of my own acceptance? Am I capable of it?"

"It is scarcely possible to believe so. But there *is* the bill."

"And if it were mine, I would take it up, did it involve a sum that would ruin me. Do you remember that bill in my college days, which was such a nightmare to me; and some of you wanted me to plead minority and get rid of it?"

"And you stuck out for honour, and declined the advice, and went into unheard-of straits to take it up. I remember."

"Well, Jephson, that bill was a life's lesson to me. I declare to you that I have never given another or accepted one. I don't believe I ever shall."

The bill, dated 'London,' was drawn a month ago. Charles could not plead that he was then on circuit, as he ought to have been. It was a curious coincidence that at the date of the bill he was in London, having run up for a couple of days upon some intricate law business, which without him was at a standstill.

"How do you say it came into your hands, Jephson?" he asked.

"We received it from White, the engraver and jeweller," was the reply. "Some property White is entitled to got thrown into Chancery, and we have been acting for him. The expenses are draining him, and he had some difficulty to pay our last bill of costs. My brother pressed for it—one can't work for nothing; and White brought this bill of yours, and asked if we

would take it in payment. Godfrey did so, and handed White the balance."

"You ought to have doubted how a bill of mine should get into a jeweller's hands."

"Not at all," drawled Jephson, who was exceedingly indolent in manner and speech. "Rather likely hands for a gentleman's bill to get into, I should say. White told us the bill was given for jewellery you had bought."

"Jewellery!" retorted Charles. "All the jewellery I have bought in the last six months is a silver pencil-case—if you can call that jewellery, and for that I gave seven shillings and paid at the time. I am not likely to lay out eighty-one pounds in jewellery; I am laying by for something far more important than that."

"Well, what's to be done?"

"Nothing—as far as I am concerned. You'll not get me to pay a bill I've never seen or heard of."

"We must protest it, Baumgarten."

"I can't help that."

They came to no satisfactory conclusion. And Mr. Jephson departed, taking the bill with him, declaring to the last, in his idle, joking manner, that the bill was undoubtedly Charles Baumgarten's, and might have been accepted in his sleep.

Charles was busy all day. After a hurried dinner

in the evening, he went out to call upon the elder of the two Jephsons; for, in spite of his assertion that he should do nothing, the affair was giving him concern, and he determined to look into it. Godfrey Jephson lived in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn; a keen, grasping man was he, quite a contrast to his brother Herbert. He was in his dining-room, but came out of it at once to Mr. Baumgarten.

"It is incomprehensible to me how you can deny the signature," he said, entering upon the matter at once. "If you saw my signature and Herbert's you would know them, would you not?"

"Yes. But——"

"And we in the same way know yours," he interrupted. "I recognized it the moment I saw it. White is a respectable man; there's not a more upright tradesman in the City of London; he is not one to say you accepted the bill if you did not. It is most strange that you should disown it, Mr. Baumgarten."

"Did White tell you I accepted it?"

"He told Herbert. I have not had time to see him."

"Go with me to him now," suggested Charles. "He will not say to my face that I have bought jewellery of him and paid him with a bill. I never saw the man in my life to my knowledge, and never was inside his shop."

Godfrey Jephson, his interest and curiosity aroused,

agreed to the proposal; and they proceeded in the dusk of the spring evening to the jeweller's, in one of the leading thoroughfares. A shopman was standing at the door.

"Mr. White in?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, sir."

"You go forward first," whispered Charles, "and enter upon it. I should like to watch his countenance. I'll come and confront him at the right time."

A smile, that caused Charles to knit his brow, crossed Mr. Jephson's face as he advanced to the jeweller. The shop was brilliant with gas. Charles sat down near the entrance, as if to wait for his friend.

"This bill," began Godfrey Jephson, taking it from his pocket-book, "was due to-day and presented for payment. Mr. Baumgarten refuses to take it up. He says it is a forgery."

"But how can Mr. Baumgarten say that?" returned the jeweller, after a few moments given to what looked like astonishment. "He accepted the bill in my presence."

"Mr. Baumgarten says that he does not know you, and that he never was in your shop to his recollection," continued the lawyer.

"Why, how is it possible that he can assert so palpable a falsehood?" retorted Mr. White. "He was here when he bought the jewellery, and has been in

once or twice besides. Let me come face to face with him, Mr. Jephson, and you'll see whether he will dare deny it. He must and shall pay the bill."

Charles Baumgarten walked slowly forward, and the jeweller's eyes fell upon him. "Why, that—that—is Mr. Baumgarten!" he uttered, though in a tone of hesitation.

"Yes; I am Charles Baumgarten. There's some mistake here, Mr. White, that I cannot understand. How is it that you told Mr. Jephson we have had dealings together?"

"Because we have had them," returned the jeweller. "The question is, how is it that you deny it? I recognize you fully now, sir. You purchased several articles of jewellery of me and paid me with this bill."

"I never bought a shilling's worth of jewellery of you in my life," replied Charles Baumgarten. "But if I had, I should not have been likely to pay you by a bill. If I bought jewellery, I should pay you in cash for it."

"And that is what you were going to do, sir; there's no doubt you came in with the intention of paying it," returned Mr. White. "You asked me to make the account out, and I did so. You laughed when you looked at the sum total, it was so much more than you had thought for; and you took out your pocket-book and counted the bank-notes in it,

and then said you had not much more than half enough with you, and the shortest way would be to draw a short bill, say at a month's notice. I had no objection. I took a bill-stamp from my desk, drew out the bill, and you accepted it at this very counter."

"It is all news to me," replied Charles. "I repeat to you, Mr. White, that I never was in this shop before to-night. I never signed or saw the bill; I never bought any jewellery here whatever."

The jeweller appeared mystified. Certainly Charles Baumgarten did not look like a man who would deny his own responsibility; moreover, the young barrister's irreproachable character was well known. Yet Mr. White knew that he had come in and bought the jewellery.

"You may as well seek to persuade me that the sun never shone, Mr. Baumgarten," he remarked. "Why, after the transaction was over, and while my man was putting up your purchases, did you not come into that room at the back there and drink a glass of old madeira? You complained of feeling chilled, and I persuaded you to take it."

"It is altogether absurd!" retorted Charles, vexed at the words. "I never did anything of the sort, and you must be mistaking me for some one else. Had I bought jewellery, I should have paid for it in cash, I tell you—not by a bill."

"You took one glass of old madeira at White's," observed Jephson, as they walked up the street. "I think you must have taken two before you went there."

"I see you believe White, and not me."

"There's no possibility of disbelieving White. Whereas you—why, Baumgarten, it is your own handwriting! Shall you take up the bill?"

"No. It is none of mine."

"What shall you do?" asked Mr. Jephson.

"I shall sleep upon it; and perhaps have a quiet word with a gentleman-detective."

As he gained Pump Court, having wished Godfrey Jephson good-evening, and turned into it in a brown study, a whistle high up greeted him. Gazing upwards, Charles perceived the face and whiskers of a friend of his looking out from the window of some chambers not far from his own.

"Hi, Baumgarten! Come up."

"Can't. Have some work to do."

"Then take the consequences."

A shower of something liquid was in preparation of descent. Charles Baumgarten made a dash, and disappeared up the stairs. Peter Chester—a grandson of that old Mr. Chester who was once Rector of Great Whitton, though the reader may have forgotten him—received Charles with a basin of hot soup in his hand.

"You'd have caught it nicely, Charley, basin and all! Just look at the precious stuff she concocts for a fellow, dying, pretty near, of an inflamed throat! I told her beef-tea, and she goes and makes this."

Charles knew of the storms that Peter Chester, who, like himself, lived in his chambers for economy's sake, and his old laundress had together. "Is your throat no better?" he asked.

"Much you care whether it's better or worse!" retorted Peter Chester, a slight young man, with a delicate face and blue eyes. "I'd never go from my word, Baumgarten. You promised to come in and sit with a fellow last night, but deuce a bit came you."

"I added 'if I could,' Peter."

"Well, if you could not—that's to say, as you did not—you might have sent Joe in to tell me so. Just get ill yourself, and see how lively your evenings would be with your throat in flannel, expecting a fellow who never comes!"

"I was coming in at eight o'clock, when old Tomkins called in, and asked me to give him a glass of wine, while he talked over old times. Every quarter-of-an-hour I thought he'd go; instead of which he stuck on till eleven o'clock and finished the bottle."

"You'll shine at the Bar, Charley, when you can

invent a white lie after that rapid fashion, and stare a man in the face as you tell it."

"Tomkins was in my chambers."

"Tomkins might be. But you were not."

"What do you mean, Peter?"

Peter Chester was looking at him, and laughing in a most provoking manner. "I don't see why you should make a mystery of it, Baumgarten," he said. "If you did choose to go out to enjoy yourself, instead of passing the evening with a sick chum, there's no reason why you should not admit it."

"Admit what?" asked Charles.

"Only you might have dropped me half a word by Joe. Who was the lady? Come, Charley; confession's good for the conscience."

"Tell me what you want me to confess, and perhaps I may do it. I'm all in the dark."

"Oh, of course," mockingly returned Peter Chester. "But a truce to jesting, old fellow," he added in a different tone. "Why need you keep it so quiet? Who was the lady?"

"What lady?"

"That you escorted last night to the Haymarket Grand tier; first row."

"I was not at the Haymarket last night," returned Charles.

"Oh, but you *were*," answered Peter Chester, with

an emphasis that unmistakably pronounced his own belief in it.

"Hear me a minute, Chester," quietly returned Charles. "I have this evening been pretty nearly persuaded out of my own identity, and I don't care to enter upon another discussion of a similar nature. I have told you that Tomkins was with me last night until eleven o'clock, and I told you truth. I did not stir out of my chambers, and by a quarter-past eleven I was in bed."

When we assert a thing in good faith it is somewhat annoying to find the assertion received doubtfully. Peter Chester stared at Charles. He knew him to be truthful; but he did not believe him now—and Charles saw he didn't.

"It was in this way," narrated Peter. "Satchel looked in this morning on his way to court, just to ask how my throat got on. 'Hope you enjoyed waiting for Baumgarten last night, Chester,' said he—for he had offered to stop the evening with me, and I told him I didn't want him; I should have Baumgarten—'hope you were jolly; *he* was.' 'Why?' said I; 'how do you know? Baumgarten never came.' 'No,' returned Satchel; 'he was at the Haymarket, rather close to a lady all the night; saw a good deal more of her face than he did of the stage.' I say, though, Charley, you were a bold fellow. Suppose

Mary Dynevor had come up from Brighton and been there?"

"I wonder Satchel did not say it was Mary Dynevor —or you," retorted Charles Baumgarten.

"You would not like it if we did," returned Peter Chester. "This looked like quite another style of damsel. Satchel thinks you had been punishing the wine, for he never saw you so gay and sparkling before—quite an improvement on the usual quietness of Charles Baumgarten. He told you so."

"Told me so!" repeated Charles, in astonishment. "Does Satchel say he spoke to me? At the theatre?"

Peter Chester nodded. "He spoke to you in the throng coming out; but he could not get very near you, he says; only gave you a few words over the people's heads."

"He gave them to some one else, not to me."

At which remark Peter Chester laughed as heartily as his throat allowed him.

Charles stayed with him until ten o'clock, and then went home to his chambers, letting himself in with his latch-key. Turning up the gas in the inner room, where he generally sat, he touched the bell upon the table. Joe came in to answer it. He was a smart lad of fifteen, who slept in the chambers.

"Any one been here, Joe?"

"No, sir, not since I came back," replied the boy.

"When was that?"

"Only now, sir."

"Only now!" repeated Charles Baumgarten. "Why, where did you stay?"

"They kept me ever so long down there, sir, while they was answering of the note—I put it upon your table, sir. Mother was here, too, to answer anybody that might ring. She had some work to do."

"Well, look here, Joe. If you are going to take to be long on your errands—as you have been several times lately—I shall have to replace you by some one who can be quicker. You can go to bed now."

## CHAPTER XII.

### WHAT THE BISHOP SAW ON THE BLOTTING-PAD.

EARLY the following morning, while Charles was at his breakfast, and before the arrival of his clerk, he was surprised by a visit from the Bishop of Denham —the same bishop, only older, whose ear for music was deficient, as he once had confided to Lady Grace. A good but rather strict and straitlaced man, who had never ceased to take an interest in Charles since Dean Baumgarten's death, with whom he had been very friendly. His carriage had brought him to Pump Court—at least, as near to it as it could approach; he came upstairs and apologized to Charles, who rose to receive him, for his early visit. He was on his way to Lambeth Palace, where he had an appointment.

The bishop opened his business standing, saying he had not time to sit down. It appeared that he was trustee for something or other, a very trivial affair, but it touched the rights of the Church, as he solemnly worded it, and an action at law was unavoidable; if

his young friend felt sufficient confidence in himself to do them justice, he would see that he was appointed leading counsel; it might be a lift to him in his profession.

"Of course all this is sub rosâ," remarked the prelate. "You will receive particulars from the solicitors, together with the brief. I'll write down one or two points, if you will give me pen and ink, to which your attention must be chiefly directed, and then, if you think you can master them, I'll mention you to the solicitors."

"If your lordship will be at the trouble of sitting at my desk, you will find all you require at hand," said Charles, rising to pilot him to it.

Down sat the bishop and wrote rapidly for five minutes. "Have you some blotting-paper?" he asked.

"The blotting-pad is under the paper you are writing upon," explained Charles, and the bishop drew it out.

Bending his head, he stared at it through his spectacles. Then, turning his severe face to Charles, he spoke in a tone that ought to have annihilated him.

"Do you give this to me to use, sir?"

Charles advanced quickly, looked, and stood confounded with vexation. On the blotting-pad, white and clean, for the top sheet must have been taken off, was a fancy drawing in pen and ink, bold, clear, and well done, of half-a-dozen ballet-girls in very airy

costumes. The colour flew to Charles's face; he knew what the bishop was. What on earth, would he judge, must be his private pastimes, if he could adorn his professional desk with such sketches, and set a bishop down to regale his eyes with them?

Charles tore off the sheet in a heat. I assure you, my lord, on my word of honour, that I know not how those—those things came there. Some one must have been here last night unknown to me, and taken the liberty to leave a remembrance behind him."

"Allow me to recommend you to burn it, sir," said the scandalized divine.

"Yes, but I will first of all endeavour to identify the offender," was Charles's answer.

Up rose the bishop, his head erect, and his apron rustling.

Charles attended him down the stairs, but his lordship did not shake hands with him. Back tore Charley, two stairs at a time. Joe's mother, who lived near at hand, and came in to attend to the work at stated times, was then removing the breakfast things.

"Were you here last night while Joe was out, Mrs. Tuff?"

"Yes, sir. I had some cleaning——"

"Who came in?" interrupted Charles.

"Nobody came, sir—not a single soul."

"Who has been into this room this morning?" continued Charles.

"Only me, sir, to put it to rights."

"Did you do this, then?" asked Mr. Baumgarten, pushing the sheet of blotting-paper under her eyes.

"Me!" cried Mrs. Tuff, who was a sharp-faced little woman in a neat stuff gown and white cap. "You must be joking, sir. When I saw it there in dusting, I thought what odd-looking ladies they was. And I put the writing-paper upon 'em, to cover 'em up a bit."

Charles reflected. "Joe wouldn't do it?" he remarked.

"*Joe!*" said Mrs. Tuff, in astonishment. "Why, sir, Joe would not dare do such a thing as that. He couldn't either. Joe haven't no talent that way. When he was a little one, I'd give him a pencil and piece of paper and tell him to draw the cat, but it would come out more like a pump."

"That just brings us round to my argument, that some one else has been in the room," said Charles. "Now, I want to find out who that is."

"It must have been done in the daytime, yesterday, sir."

"The last thing before dinner yesterday evening, after Mr. Clay left, I wrote a note at the table and used this blotting-pad," returned Mr. Baumgarten,

"and left it as I used it, much marked with ink. Did Mr. Clay come in last night for any purpose?"

"No, sir. And if he had, he'd not have left them disrespectful things behind him."

That was true enough. But Mr. Clay, joint clerk to Charles and another young barrister, might have let some one in who had so amused himself; some lawyer's clerk with a hasty brief, who possessed more skill than discretion. However, the woman persisted that no person whatever had entered; and Charles Baumgarten thought it a mystery which seemed, for the moment, incapable of solution.

Sitting down to his desk, he began to look over some papers. A few minutes later, and Charles had occasion to open one of the deep drawers on either side the desk. He took his bunch of keys from his pocket and fitted one into the lock. But it would not open. The lock had evidently been tampered with—and he had left it in perfect condition the previous evening. Mrs. Tuff was called in again.

"Will you believe now that some one has been at mischief in the room?" demanded her master. "They have been at the drawers: I cannot unlock them."

She stood, somewhat incredulous; and Mr. Baumgarten, taking another key, tried the opposite drawer. It opened readily, but he gazed at it as if transfixed. "Look here!" he sharply uttered.

The woman advanced and stood behind his chair. It was full of papers and parchments, all in inextricable confusion.

"Do you see this?" he cried sharply.

"I see the drawer is in a fine mess," was her rejoinder.

"Now listen, Mrs. Tuff. Yesterday evening, after I had written the note I spoke of, before I sealed it I opened this drawer to put a parchment in; at that time it was in perfect order, and I locked it and left it so. There is some mystery in all this."

Mrs. Tuff could dispute facts no longer, she had to give in to the evidence of her eyes. "Sir," she said, "what a good thing it is that I was here last night instead of young Joe! We might have accused him of doing it for mischief."

"I don't know that it is a good thing," significantly retorted her master. "The fact must be that you dropped asleep last night and let some one get in."

The woman was indignant at the insinuation. "Sir," returned she, "I'd rather you accused me of doing it myself than say that. I don't think I as much as sat down last night, for I thought it a good opportunity to clean out the cupboards; and that's what I was doing the whole evening."

Dismissing her, Charles Baumgarten sat thinking it over. By a desperate wrench he succeeded in opening

the drawer, and its contents appeared to be untouched. Altogether, it was singular. Had any one got in for the purpose of plunder, rummaged over the contents of one drawer, attempted the lock of the other, would he have been likely to leave his trail behind him in the shape of those ballet-girls, whose appearance had nearly done for the bishop? No. Charles concluded some one of his own acquaintances must have done it for a "lark," and he would very much like to find out which of them it was.

Only a few minutes had elapsed when Mrs. Tuff reappeared, asking permission to speak.

"It has all come over me this moment as clear as daylight, sir," she began, advancing a few steps into the room. "Some rogue must have got in last night through your leaving the key in the passage-door."

"Through—what do you say?" asked her master.

"The latch-key, sir. You left it in the door when you went out the second time."

"I don't know what you mean, Mrs. Tuff. I did not leave my key in the door last night or any other night."

"Why, yes, sir, you did," was her answer, spoken in a tone of remonstrance. "Else how could I have got in?"

"What are you dreaming of now? You have your own key."

"But you took mine from me last night, sir. Don't you remember?' she added, seeing Mr. Baumgarten appeared not to comprehend. "When I came back, I found the latch-key in the door, and I knew you had left it there for me; but I thought it not a safe thing to do, sir, if you'll forgive me for saying it."

Charles Baumgarten looked at the woman in amazement, for not a syllable of what she was saying could he understand. He ordered her to explain.

"When you came back, sir, not long after you went out——"

"Stop a bit. We shall never come to the end in this way. I went out after dinner, and I came home at ten o'clock. I took my key with me, and let myself in with it on my return. What other tale are you telling?"

"I don't mean that at all, sir; I mean when you came back at dusk," obstinately persisted the woman.

"I did not come back at dusk."

Mrs. Tuff paused, wondering, no doubt, whether night and sleep had affected her master's memory. "Sir," she said, "perhaps you might call things to mind if you tried. When you had gone away after dinner I went out to do an errand or two, and had just shut the door, when you ran up the stairs and took my key from me to let yourself in. I suppose you had forgotten to take out yours. I was away maybe half-an-hour, and when I came back what

should I see but my latch-key outside the door—and I know my key from yours, sir, by the dent in it. I knew you had left it there for me to get in with; still I didn't think it was safe. London is such a place for thievery—and the Temple's no more secure than any other part."

"You have done a pretty thing," was the comment of Mr. Baumgarten. "It was not to me you gave the key."

The woman felt hurt. "I'm near-sighted, sir, I know that, and my eyes are sometimes at fault; but they are not so bad that I could mistake anybody else for my own master."

A silence ensued. Mrs. Tuff chiefly passed it in staring. Charles signed to her to retire.

He sat on, asking himself where and what the mystery could be. Personated at the jeweller's, his handwriting appearing upon a bill, accused of showing himself off at the Haymarket Theatre in questionable companionship, and now personated in his chambers to the deception of his own servant!

Had Cyras Baumgarten been in Europe, Charles might have supposed, remembering there used to be much likeness between them, and might be still, that he was the actor in all this; but, as Charles knew, Cyras was where he had been for some years past—in New Zealand.

An uncomfortable feeling clung to Charles all day; go where he would, he carried it about with him, even to the courts and into the presence of the judges.

In the evening he went to call at Eaton Place; he had not done so since Mary went to Brighton. Dr. Dynevor was still in town, and, much to Charles's surprise, he found that Mary was also; she had returned that day. Upon being admitted, he saw the maid who had, as he knew, attended Mary crossing the hall.

"You are back again, Sarah!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, we came up to-day," the girl answered, and proceeded to explain the reason. The family they were staying with at Brighton received news of the dangerous illness of a relative at Cheltenham, and had to speed thither at once.

Instead of being shown to the drawing-room as usual, Charles was marshalled to a small one off the dining-room, and Miss Dynevor came to him. By the fierce look of her flaxen wig, her raised eyebrows, and her haughty tone, Charles saw that something was amiss.

"Then it *is* Mr. Charles Baumgarten!" she exclaimed, as if his appearance solved a doubt. "When the butler announced your name, I told him he must be mistaken. May I inquire the purport of your visit, sir?"

Charles laughed. Miss Dynevor was subject to changes of mood and manner, but he did not let them trouble him, any more than the boys and girls did. "I came to take tea with you for one thing, Miss Dynevor. And Mary has come home, I hear," was his answer.

"Yes; she has returned," stiffly responded Miss Dynevor. "But—you must be aware that it is not convenient to receive you this evening."

Charles looked at her; there was something in her voice, her manner, that he had never met before, and his pulses quickened with a sense of coming evil.

"Or at any future time," continued the lady, who had not taken a seat or asked Charles to do so.

"But why?" exclaimed Charles. "What have I done?"

"You cannot really need to inquire, Charles Baumgarten, and it will be particularly unpleasant to me to inform you," said she.

"Nevertheless, I must press you to do so," said Charles. "A man cannot meet a charge blindfold, Miss Dynevor."

She drew herself up; the flaxen curls seemed to bristle. "I saw you in a situation, sir, the night before last at the play, which—which—which—in fact, perfectly shocked me. 'If that dear defunct gentleman, the late Dean of Denham, had seen this,'

I breathed to myself, 'he would have disowned his son—as we must do from this hour.' And I came straight home, I avow to you, sir, and acquainted my brother, and said sufficient to my nieces to satisfy them that you were a black sheep. Since Mary returned, I have explained to her; and—and—of course she will give you up."

Charles had listened to her with deference. "Now will you please tell me, Miss Dynevor, where you saw me, and what the 'situation' might be," he said, when she had concluded.

"You are truly bold to ask it, Charles Baumgarten," she retorted. "But what else could I expect? No, sir; my communication is closed."

"I beg your pardon; your communication at present amounts to nothing. To continue it is due to me."

"Very due," she sarcastically answered. "And no less necessary than due, considering that you saw me as plainly as I saw you."

"Was it at the Haymarket Theatre?"

Miss Dynevor gave vent to a modest little scream which she smothered in her handkerchief.

"Whether it was at the Haymarket or whether it was at Westminster Abbey, it need not be alluded to," she retorted, "and I have never been subjected to speak of such things. You are a hypocrite, Charles

Baumgarten; it is what most young men of the present day are. I've heard them compared to whited sepulchres, and I think the comparison a very good one. Our interview is at an end, sir."

She swept away majestically, leaving Charles to make an ignominious exit from the house. But Charles was not in a hurry to do it. He wanted to explain, yet with whom? The sub-dean was so hot and peppery, especially in the first blush of an affair, that an explanation with him generally did more harm than good. Apart from that, what explanation had Charles to give? None. None that would be believed.

As he stood thus thinking, the room-door was slowly pushed open and Regina appeared.

"She's gone, isn't she, Charley? Was she very dreadful?"

"Very," returned Charley, shutting the door.

"When Aunt Ann has a grievance, no one can come up to her, and it's many a year since she had such a grievance as this one," went on Regina. "Oh, Charley, what fun it was!—how did you pluck up the courage?—and who was it?"

"Just tell me what you've heard," said he.

"That you were at the Haymarket Theatre, in its most conspicuous place, beauing a lady with painted cheeks. We got it all out of Janet, Aunt Ann's maid.

You should have heard Aunt Ann in her room last night, old Janet says, and all the names she called you!"

"I suppose this has been told to Mary?"

"Trust Aunt Ann for that. Who was the lady, Charley?"

"I wonder, Regina, whether you'll believe me if I tell you something?"

"Try me. Perhaps you are going to say it was Gertrude?"

"Gertrude is at Great Whitton, you know. I don't know who it was, Regina, for I was not at the theatre at all."

"Not at the theatre!"

"No. I was in chambers all the night. I've heard of this already. A friend of Peter Chester's thought he saw me there—just as you describe. It must have been some fellow who bears a resemblance to me. Can't you get Mary to come down to me? Do, Regina. And you will please tell her *from me* that there's not a word of truth in the tale. I must see her for a minute or two."

"She will have to smuggle herself down the staircase, then! Aunt Ann is sure to be on the watch," returned Regina. "I'll go and see."

Very shortly Mary came stealing in. She was looking pale, but in better health than before she

went to Brighton. Charles stood before her in agitation.

"Mary, before I attempt to greet you, let me assure you that the story which they have got up about me is utterly false. *You* will not believe it?"

"Oh no, no!" she wildly said, as she burst into tears and put her head upon his breast. He was about to clasp her in his arms when the door was flung back and Dr. Dynevor walked in.

"To your room, young lady," he cried imperiously to the terrified girl, who had drawn away from her lover with a gasp. "Have you no sense of shame? To your room, I say."

Closing the door after her retreating figure, the canon turned his wrath upon Charles. "How dare you appear at this house?"

Charles knew what that wrath meant, and strove to arm himself for the contest. "There's no reason, sir, why I should not appear," he was beginning, when the sub-dean stopped him, all the floodgates of his temper let loose.

To Charles's confused astonishment, he found that all was known—the repudiated bill for jewellery; the lady with painted cheeks on his arm at the theatre; the disreputable ballet-girls on his blotting-pad. The last item had been confidentially mentioned that afternoon by the Bishop of Denham.

Meeting Dr Dynevor on his return to town, the doctor, full of wrath even then, had told the prelate about Charles and the Haymarket episode, upon which the bishop, sadly put out for Charles's sake, reciprocated the information by telling of the pen-and-ink sketches.

"He is going to the—ahem!—to the bad all one way," growled the sub-dean—and would have said the "deuce," but remembered to whom he was talking.

Charles stood speechless, literally not knowing what defence to make. "Will it be of any use my denying this, sir?" he asked, in a pause of the storm.

"Denying it! To me? Does this impudence become you, Charles Baumgarten?"

"It would not become me, sir, if it were true. But —nay, pray hear me for a moment, Dr. Dynevor—it is not true. I declare to you, sir, as truthfully as I can ever speak in this world, that, so far as I am concerned, it is all false. It was not I who did this."

Dr. Dynevor glared at him through his spectacles.

"I did not buy any jewellery, and I did not accept the bill; I was not at the theatre or out of my chambers that night; and I cannot tell who it was that drew the figures on the blotting-pad. I did not know they were there until the bishop spoke. Do you believe me, sir?"

"Believe you! I believe you to be a rascal, un-

worthy to remain inside my house. I will trouble you to go out of it."

The sub-dean rang the bell. "The door for Mr. Charles Baumgarten," he said to the servant.

Charles splashed through the streets in the mud and the rain, for it had turned out a boisterous night, wondering whether he should ever be able to clear himself, and whether the police would be able to fathom the mystery if he called them to his aid.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AT GREAT WHITTON.

THE trees at Great Whitton grew bright with the tender green of spring, and the hedges were budding into leaf. Gertrude Baumgarten was slowly walking through one of the country lanes towards Avon House, enjoying the freshness of the morning. The sun shone, the skies were blue and unclouded, the air felt warm almost as that of a summer's day, and the birds sang with a rapture that is so exhilarating on these days when all nature is springing into new life and beauty.

Gertrude had been into the village. She looked fair and lovely as ever; more lovely, perhaps, than her mother had looked before her, for her face was a less proud one. Proud enough it was, but not as Lady Grace's had been; and latterly Gertrude's had assumed a somewhat sad expression, as if she were not altogether as happy as of old.

Leaning over the small wicket which was placed

only a few yards from the large iron gates at Avon House stood Lord Avon, looking at her as she advanced. He had been living at his place all the spring, and his sister, Lady Grace, with her daughter, Gertrude, had for the last few weeks been staying with him. The earl was the same good-natured man he had ever been, and looked very little altered. His locks were more scanty than of yore, and a few silver threads might be seen amongst them, but in all else he appeared unchanged.

"You are back at last, Gertrude!"

"At last?" she repeated. "Why? Have you wanted me, Uncle Avon?"

"Not at all. But I have been watching for you for an age. What are you carrying in that small parcel?"

"Feminine matters in which you can scarcely be interested," laughed Gertrude. "I've been matching silks in the village for my screen work, and it took me a long time, for I wanted many shades. Then I went on to see old Mrs. Whittaker, who grows more deaf and crotchety day by day."

Lord Avon opened the gate for Gertrude, and she passed through. She now stood by his side, whilst he, leaning over it as before, appeared to be gazing at the far distance.

"Are you watching for some one else, Uncle Henry?"

"No," replied Lord Avon; "I was only thinking, Gertrude. I am going down to the Rectory presently; your mother wants me to ask them to come in to dinner."

"Oh, pray do," said Gertrude. "It will make it less dull for them and for us. I wish you would tell me something," she continued, after a pause.

"Well? What do you want to know?" he inquired, certain in his own mind as to the nature of her request.

"The letter you were reading at the breakfast-table —I chanced to see the writing, you remember, and said it was from Charles; upon which you put it hastily into your pocket, telling me that I saw too much and too quickly. It *was* from Charles, was it not?"

"Yes. You were quite right."

"Then why did you rush it away in that manner, and pretend that I was mistaken, Uncle Henry?"

"Because I wished not to draw your mother's attention to it. I did not altogether understand the letter, and wanted to go over it again alone. Charley has been getting into a mess."

"What sort of a mess?" asked Gertrude.

"All sorts of messes," replied his lordship. "He was seen at the play one night in strange company. Again, the old Bishop of Denham, calling at his

chambers, found some very unorthodox pen-and-ink sketches on his blotting-pad. Charley forthwith went down in his lordship's estimation, and lost some work the bishop had just offered him. I should like to have seen the good man's face," broke off Lord Avon, laughing.

"But is that all?" asked Gertrude. "It does not seem a very terrible affair, if there is nothing more behind it."

"It certainly sounds rather like a case of Much ado about nothing,'" assented the earl. "But it is not quite all. Charles has been going in largely for jewellery, and can't, or won't, pay for it."

"It is very unlike Charles to do that," said Gertrude.

"The singular point in it is that Charles altogether denies it," continued Lord Avon. "He protests to me that he has not done anything of the kind; and thinks that some one must have been personating him, either in jest or else as an out-and-out fraud."

"Is the bill for jewellery a heavy one?"

"Nearly a hundred pounds."

"A hundred pounds!" exclaimed Gertrude. "I cannot believe it. What is your own opinion, Uncle Henry? Do you think Charley has done all this, or that some one—as he calls it—has been personating him?"

"Shouldn't care to go too closely into that question,"

said his easy lordship. "Shouldn't have the smallest doubt upon the point myself, but for one thing: Charley has hitherto been the very quintessence of truth and honour."

"Of course he is, and always has been, and always will be!" cried Gertrude warmly. "He is not likely to change now. Uncle Avon, Charles would never buy jewellery that he could not pay for. As to the play—I suppose they mean that he went to it with some fast young men—perhaps had been dining with them. I dare say he couldn't help himself."

"That's just it," said Lord Avon. "It is so easy for young fellows living in London to slide unconsciously into debt and all manner of trouble. Do you see that hill?" he added, pointing a little way to the left.

"Whitton Beacon? Yes. But what has that to do with Charlie?"

"When I was a youngster, I and some other lads used to go to the top of that mound and slide down it. Once off, no earthly power could have stopped us until we reached the bottom. So is it with young fellows like Charley; once in for a thing, it is almost impossible to pull up. In this instance, I dare say, he bought chains and rings at different times, never pausing to think that in the end the items would mount up to a formidable sum."

"Does he ask you to help him? Is that his reason for writing?"

"Not at all. He distinctly disowns any motive of the kind; does not intend to pay the bill himself, or to allow any one else to pay it for him. He says he knows that Dr. Dynevor is about to acquaint me with the whole affair, and wishes to give me first of all his own version of it. Amongst other changes the engagement with Mary is broken off."

"But that is serious," exclaimed Gertrude, much troubled. "It will ruin both their lives! Who has done it?"

"Dr. Dynevor, and on account of these matters. I'm sorry for Charley, and suppose I must see into it," concluded the earl, passing at length through the gate. "If I find he has imposed this fine tale of innocence upon me, I shall be more angry with him than I ever was before in my life. Don't speak of it to your mother, Gertrude. Now I must be off to the Rectory."

He walked away. Gertrude went slowly up the garden and crossed to a natural arbour formed by the interlacing trees, and there sat down on a bench overshadowed by the flowering lilac and drooping laburnum. Removing her straw hat, and letting it hang from her arm by its long blue streamers, she began to think of Charles. She wished Lord Avon

had shown her the letter; but he had declined to do so. A faint sound of voices came to her through the open window of the drawing-room; some one must have called, and was talking with her mother.

"Perhaps it is Mr. Brice," she thought, alluding to the old doctor, who was attending Lady Grace. "He must be back from London, I think. He ran up for a few hours, he said, and that's two days ago." But it was not on Mr. Brice, or on any one else likely to call, that Gertrude's mind lingered; it was on this new trouble of Charles's, and what it might or might not involve in the future.

"If she and Charles should part for good, would Everard return to her?" shyly wondered Gertrude, with flushing cheeks. "He said—— Why—— Who is this?"

She half rose in her astonishment. Strolling down the broad path from the house came Sir Everard Wilmot. Could it be he? Gertrude gazed as one in a dream.

He went as far as the little gate, over which she and Lord Avon had recently been leaning, stood there for a minute looking out, and then returned. When opposite Gertrude's arbour, he caught sight of the soft folds of a muslin dress, and turned quickly. Gertrude felt greatly agitated. Sir Everard walked across the lawn and held out his hand.

"I am so much surprised," she said, as her own hand met his and her lovely face turned rose colour. "I had not even heard that you were expected."

"I came down from London this morning," he answered, as he took his seat beside her. "When Avon was last in town he invited me to come to him for a day or two. Having nothing particularly on hand just now, I thought the occasion too good to be lost."

He paused, looking earnestly at Gertrude, who felt her nervousness increasing.

"You are not sorry to see me, Miss Baumgarten?"

"Oh no; why should I be sorry?" fluttered Gertrude. "We must all be glad to see you, for it is dull here. I often wish myself away."

"Are *you* glad to see me?" he asked, more pointedly.

"Oh yes! I am—very glad," said Gertrude, hesitating, and again blushing violently. "And mamma and Uncle Avon will be especially so."

A moment's silence. Then Sir Everard took possession of the hand again, and bent a little forward, his face, slightly agitated, turned to hers.

"I am given to plain speaking, as you may remember, Gertrude; I cannot beat about the bush with fine phrases, as some men can," he said. "My dear, I came here to-day with one sole object—that of asking you to be my wife. Oh, Gertrude! don't say me nay again!"

She bent her head and her changing face, but gave him no other answer.

"Don't you care for me, Gertrude?" he continued sadly. "Cannot you care for me?"

And, what with surprise, perplexity, and agitation, Miss Baumgarten lost all her dignity and burst into tears.

Somehow he did not regard it as a bad omen. Perhaps he was an expert at interpreting signs and tokens. However that might be, he put his arm round her and drew her gently to him.

"My darling!" he whispered with impassioned fervour. "I see that you will not send me away." And Gertrude bent her face still lower as she murmured:

"Perhaps you have not heard—Mary Dynevor and Charles—their engagement is broken off."

He gathered her meaning at once.

"Gertrude, don't you know me better than that?" he rejoined. "Did you not know, did you not see in the past days, that it was not Mary Dynevor I loved, but you? When you refused me, refused even to listen to a word I would have spoken, I turned to Mary in—I fear I must say it—vexation of soul. My dear, why did you treat me so?"

Should she ever be able to tell him? Not yet, at any rate. She had mistaken his frequent visits to the

sick daughter of a lady staying in the place, friends of her own and of Lady Grace. A foolish, gossiping woman had whispered to Gertrude that Mr. Wilmot was paying so much attention to this young lady that their engagement was an absolute certainty. Gertrude believed it, and became at once so resentfully jealous, that when Mr. Wilmot not long afterwards spoke to her, in her pride she retaliated upon him with indignation. No, she could not tell him all this to-day, or speak of the sore repentance which had ever since lain upon her.

She drew herself to the end of the bench, put her hat on decorously, and essayed to converse upon indifferent topics: the beauty of the day, the scent of the lilac, the song of the birds. "Do you see that laburnum?" she asked, scarcely knowing what she said. "It is my favourite tree; the most beautiful of all trees; the most graceful of all blossoms."

"Yes," he replied; "I almost agree with you. The country people call it 'gold chain' down with us," he added, smiling.

"Down with you?"

"In the country where my home is; the fairest county in the heart of England. Soon to be your home also, I hope, Gertrude. My darling, may the chains that bind our future lives together be as fair and golden as those of your favourite blossom."

"Does Uncle Henry know you are here?" she suddenly asked.

"Why, of course he does. I was with him for half-an-hour before he went out."

"I wonder he did not tell me you were here."

"He no doubt thought he would leave it for me to tell you. I have his best wishes, Gertrude, and your mother's also. Ah, my dear, you can find no excuse for turning from me now."

Gertrude rose. He placed her hand on his arm, and they walked together up the path. Lady Grace looked at them from the window with a smile of welcome. Sir Everard nodded to her.

A remembrance rushed into Lady Grace's heart, and a flood of tears to her eyes. Just so, in that very garden, in the days long gone by, had *she* loved and listened. Listened and loved and yielded to the impassioned vows of him who had alone made a heaven of her life—Gertrude's father, Ryle Baumgarten.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### SURPRISES.

HAND locked in hand, they stood together in the dusk of evening at the chambers in Pump Court, gazing into one another's eyes—Cyras and Charles Baumgarten.

It was the evening after Charles's ignominious exit from the house of Dr. Dynevor. He had been busy all day; had been in court, the junior counsel in an insignificant case; had made one at a consultation at Lincoln's Inn; had been occupied in other ways. The only personal thing he had found time to do for himself was to write the letter spoken of in the last chapter to Lord Avon. And now, the day's work over and his dinner over, he was mentally deliberating as to whether he should at once apply to the police for counsel in his curious dilemma, or wait and see what the next day or two would bring forth—when he heard the sound of a visitor approaching.

A gentleman of free and easy manners had run up the stairs to the door which bore on it the name of

"Mr. Charles Baumgarten." Knocking with the silver head of his very elegant cane, he had stood humming a tune until the summons was answered by the boy, Joe. "Master in?" he cried airily, and walked forward without waiting for a reply, as if he knew his way about the chambers as well as Joe himself did. The boy stared in amazement; he had never seen two people so much alike as this gentleman and his master.

"Charley lad!" Joe heard him say in salutation.

The resemblance was certainly wonderful. Height, figures, features, even the voices, were the same. Only in the expression of the two countenances a difference might be seen. That of Cyras was gay, light, laughing, as if he had never in his whole life heard of a thing called care; that of Charles was thoughtful and rather sad. And their resemblance to their late father, the Dean of Denham, was as great as it was to one another.

"Don't you know me, Charley?"

Intense surprise had struck Charles dumb.

"Yes, I know you, Cyras, my brother; but I can't believe yet that it is really you."

"There's no mistaking the likeness," laughed Cyras. "Look at yourself in the glass, and then look at me. Folks might vow we were twins. You are silent with surprise, Charley."

"I am more than surprised: I am bewildered. Sit down. How long have you been in England?"

"A few weeks. But most of it has been spent in Paris, not in England. I've been sticking to work like a brick for a long time, and I thought I had earned a holiday; so I came over to the old country, to see you all. When I arrived, I found you had all flown in different directions: you had gone on circuit, and Berkeley Square was shut up."

"They are staying at Great Whitton with Uncle Avon. You should have sent us word that you were coming, Cyras."

"I couldn't. I steamed away from Wellington the very day that I made up my mind to come over. The fact is, Charley, I—but I need not bother you by going into everything," added Cyras. "How is the dear mother?"

"Quite well."

"And Gertrude? Is she as pretty as ever? Any chance of her getting spliced?"

"You should keep colonial terms for colonial life," quoth Charles. "Spliced!"

"All right," promptly returned Cyras. "Is there any prospect of the fair Miss Baumgarten's being led to the hymeneal altar?"

Charles stopped his ears. "That's worse, Cyras!" And they both laughed.

"Answer my question, Charley. What of Gertrude?"

"Well, I—can't say anything for certain," hesitated Charles. "But I should not very much wonder if we heard of a wedding before very long."

Cyras became serious. He was aroused to interest in his sister, of whom he had always been especially fond. "I hope it's something good, Charley."

"Good in every way, if it turns out to be fact. Plenty of money, and an admirable man. He likes her, I think, and she—more than likes him. It is Everard Wilmot."

"Everard Wilmot," repeated Cyras, in surprise. "Once attached to the embassy in Paris?"

"The same."

"I know him, then. He'll do."

"How can you have known him?" asked Charles. "He was in Paris only for a short time, and it's ever so many years ago. You must have been about seventeen."

"Not quite as young as that, Charley. I took a flying escapade without leave over to Paris, with John Sherron, angering"—his face flushed, and he spoke in a low tone and with deep feeling—"my dear father. You knew nothing of it; you were at Eton. Gertrude knew, and so did Lady Grace. In Paris I saw Wilmot, but did not become acquainted with him."

"You don't know much of him, then."

"Wait a bit. Not much; no. After that—later—Wilmot was over in Wellington, where I did make his acquaintance. What's more, I was able to render him a service, which I know he has not forgotten to this day."

"What was it?"

"Don't ask me, Charley, for I can't tell you. I promised him then I would never speak of it, and I never shall. Not that there was anything dishonourable to him in the affair, but the contrary. If Gertrude has chosen him, she has done well."

"There's nothing certain about it yet, I fancy. Only, a hint was whispered to me that—— *Cyras!*" burst out Charles, as an idea flashed across him. "It was you who came to my rooms here the night before last! It was you who pilfered the key from my old laundress!"

Cyras nodded. "I took the key from her hand and let myself in with it. The woman took me for you; I saw that, and kept up the joke. And when I got in, Charley, I found only empty rooms; no one to welcome me."

"But you need not have played Old Harry with them, Cyras; turned the drawers inside out and ornamented the blotting-pad to the Bishop of Denham's pious horror and my own confusion."

"The blotting-pad! Oh, I left that as a memento of my visit; I had no card-case with me," laughed Cyras. "And for the drawers, I had only a fancy, Charley, for seeing what you kept in your lockers."

"You know the Bishop of Denham?"

"I ought to do so. He used to read me lectures an hour long. I remember he once told my father that he ought to keep over me the severe rod of correction."

"Well, he was here the next morning early, and in all innocence I gave him the blotting-pad to use. You may, perhaps, fancy his looks, and his opinion of me, when those sinful sketches met his outraged eyes."

Charley thought his brother never would cease laughing. It was the best joke, he declared, that he had heard for many a day.

"But there are other things, Cyras," Charles resumed, "and they are not trifles. You have been forging my name to a bill."

All the mirth in the elder's face gave place to astonishment. "Forged your name to a bill!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say," returned Charles.

"I declare most solemnly that I have never done anything of the kind, Charley. You may put down as much folly to me as you will; but—*forgery!* You are dreaming, lad."

"You bought a lot of jewellery from a man named White," continued Charles, who, of course, was no longer at any loss to know who had so mysteriously personated him. "You paid him by a bill, purporting to be accepted by me. And you—— "

"But the bill's not due ?" hastily interrupted Cyras, lifting his head in surprise.

"It was due a day or two ago, and—— "

"By Jove ! I made no memorandum of the date. How time flies ! "

"But why did you attach my name to it ?"

"I signed it with my own name, 'C. Baumgarten.' I made it payable here, for I had no settled address in London, with all of you out of it—north, south, east, and west. By Jove ! that bill due ! They didn't bring it to you, did they ? "

"Of course they brought it to me, believing it was mine. And I disowned it, and it's not paid yet; and there's I don't know what work about it. It was a pretty close imitation of my handwriting, Cy."

"It was my own handwriting, and no imitation of any one else's. I wrote my name as I always do, and always have done. As we are alike in person, Charles, so we are in writing. You know it."

"You have given me little opportunity of knowing it of late," was the reply. "It must be months since you wrote to me, Cyras."

"I've made your letters to me do duty for both of us," returned the free-and-easy Cyras, "and have sent you one of our splendid newspapers in return. I have no end of business letters to write now, besides looking after the shipping; so that when the day comes to an end I don't care to set to work again."

"You seem to have taken quite a business turn," remarked Charles, only half believing in his brother's industry.

"I took that a long time ago. It's a positive fact, Charley. They are going to give me a share in the concern."

"Who are?"

"Brice and Jansen. Anyway, they talk of it.

"And what about this bill, Cyras?"

"Oh, I'll see to it," said Cyras, airily. "Don't let it bother your head, lad."

It seemed that he did not allow it to bother his own. Seated back in Charley's easiest chair, his legs stretched out to the blaze—for the evening was chilly, and a fire had been kindled—Cyras lighted a small meerschaum with which he had come provided, and held it between his complacent lips.

"One can't do long without one's smoke," he remarked. "Hope you don't mind it up here, Charley?"

"Not after business hours," laughed Charles. "Have you any more bills out, Cyras?"

"One more."

"And made payable here?"

Cyras nodded.

"And what is the amount?"

"Can't remember. A hundred pounds or so. It's a Bond Street tailor. I was obliged to have a regular rig-out. Colonial tailors don't do for London."

Charles Baumgarten recalled a rumour he had heard about a month before—that whispered inquiries were being made as to his finances.

"Cyras, do you want to ruin me?" he cried in a startled tone. "I must take up these bills if you do not."

"Take up the bills!" echoed Cyras. "What for? You did not accept them."

"But the people think I did."

"Rubbish! Let them think what they like. I'll go with you to the parties, and show myself, and convict them of their error. Charley, lad, what a long face you are drawing! Just as you used to do when we were young boys and I led you into a scrape. Didn't I always get you out of it then? And I'll get you out of this. In fact, you are not in it."

"How will you get me out of it?"

"By paying the bills myself. I'll settle all up before leaving England."

"Why not pay at once?"

"Can't," lightly returned Cyras. "Money runs away over here; it simply melts in Paris. I brought about three hundred pounds with me, and it's all gone. I've telegraphed out to old Brice to send me more."

"Why did you not pay the jeweller at the time you bought his goods?"

"The bill came to so much more than I had thought for, and I hadn't enough in my pocket. Oh, it's all right, old fellow."

"And pray, Cyras, if I may put so bold a question, for whom were all those pretty things bought?"

"For one and another. Some for myself. Some for Gertrude. Some to send out to Wellington."

"For Gertrude?"

"To be sure. I'm keeping them all for her. Having left Wellington so hastily, I was not able to lay in a stock of presents, so I got some over here. And I got some for Mrs. Carington."

"Who on earth is she?"

"Our purser's wife. She made the passage with him this time, to pay a visit to his folk in London. Good-hearted people, both of them, and made as much of me on board as if I had been a lord. The ship is chartered by Brice and Jansen, you know, Charley."

"Then you will go with me to these people about the bills, Cyras—the jeweller and the tailor?" resumed Charles, after a pause.

"I'll go now, if you like. I don't want to let you in for annoyance, brother mine."

"You have let me in for a good deal of that already, Cyras. Were you at the Haymarket two or three nights ago."

"Yes."

"And there you were taken for me. Who was the lady? It was half over London the next day that I had been there in suspicious company."

"What a joke!" exclaimed Cyras, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and putting it up.

"You may look upon it as a good joke, Cyras, but it has half ruined me," said Charles, with some bitterness.

"I knew I was being taken for you, Charley," said Cyras, carelessly. "Some fellows nodded to me, and one or two spoke, and I nodded back again and kept up the jest."

"A sorry jest for me, Cyras. I was engaged to be married—to Mary Dynevor."

"I'm uncommonly glad to hear it," cried Cyras, stretching out his hand to grasp his brother's. "Mary was the nicest of all the younger girls—as nice as Cyrilla."

"I said '*was* engaged,' Cyras. It is broken off now. Old Miss Dynevor saw me, as she thought, at the Haymarket with some one I had no business to be

with; and she went home and told the sub-dean. The next time I called in Eaton Place he turned me out of doors, and bade me think no more of his daughter."

Cyras suddenly became serious. "This has gone farther than I intended," he cried. "All my life I have been getting myself or others into scrapes, and I suppose I shall do so to the end of the chapter. And the best and the worst of it is that I generally manage to come out in worse colours than I deserve—as on this occasion."

Charles looked up. "Have they been traducing you as well as me?" he asked.

"The lady I treated to the theatre was no other than Mrs. Carington, as good a woman as ever lived, although, as Tony Lumpkin would say, her cheeks are as broad and red as a pulpit cushion. But it is all genuine colour, Charley, just as she herself is a genuine woman."

"What brought you there alone with her?" asked Charles.

"That I was with her alone was an accident," answered Cyras. "I treated them to the Haymarket, and took three of the best seats. At the last moment, just as we were about to start in a cab, Carington's old father came in to spend the evening, and he had to remain with him."

"I think you were imprudent, to say the least of it," laughed Charles. "The lady was wonderfully got up, I was told."

"Like all born colonists, she is fond of any amount of fans and feathers," returned Cyras. "It was her first introduction to a London theatre, and a great occasion to her, and she put on all her war paint accordingly. But of other paint she had none, Charley; she is too honest and good for that."

"Where are the Caringtons staying?"

"With his brother. He's a widower, and lives in a pretty house up Chelsea way. Decent, intelligent people, Charley; though, of course, not up to your mark."

"And where are you staying, Cyras?"

"I! You may well ask it, *mon frère.* Finding no home open to me on landing, the first individual I dropped upon, after leaving the ship at the docks, was Harry Brice. He is in Somerset House, you know—getting on, too; and was bound that morning on some expedition to the Customs. He told me you were on circuit; thought the mother and Gertrude were at Avon, and said I must come to them at Norwood. Down I went. But Norwood's out of the way for a fellow who wants to knock about town, and I came back to an hotel. Then I went to Paris with Tom Howard—you know Tom Howard, Charley?"

"Don't I! Spends all before him, and does no work."

Cyras laughed. "I met him accidentally one morning. He said he was off to Paris that evening, and I agreed to go with him. And here I am back again. And now you know all, Charley."

"Quite enough too," laughed Charley. "We'll go to White's now." And Cyras agreed with alacrity.

The jeweller's shop was lighted when they reached it. Mr. White and his assistant were both in it. Charles walked forward; Cyras held back a moment.

"I hear that bill is protested, Mr. White," began Charles.

"Yes, sir, or about to be," answered the jeweller. "And I must say I am surprised that a gentleman like yourself should allow things to come to such a pass. If it was not convenient to you to pay it now, you might have renewed it."

"I tell you again, as I told you before, that the bill is none of mine," said Charles. "I never bought the articles."

"I say that you did, sir, and that the bill is yours," returned White, showing temper for the first time. "To deny it is a paltry subterfuge which a gentleman in your position should be above——"

Charles interrupted. "You would swear to me before the Lord Mayor, I suppose?"

"Before all the Lord Mayors in the three kingdoms and the corporations too," retorted White, now thoroughly roused. "If you——"

Cyras walked forward and stood beside his brother.

"Look at this gentleman," said Charles Baumgarten.

The jeweller gazed in amazement, now at one, now at the other. "What does it mean?" he cried at last. "Who are you, sir?" turning to Cyras.

"Well," cried Cyras, who looked upon the whole matter as an excellent joke, "don't you know me again?"

"You must be twins!" exclaimed the perplexed man.

"Not at all," said Cyras. "We are brothers, but not twins. I'm two years older than Mr. Charles Baumgarten."

"Sir," said the jeweller, turning to Charles, "allow me to ask why you did not explain to me that you had a brother who bore to you so remarkable a likeness? It might have solved the mystery."

"Because I never thought of him at all in the matter; I did not know he was in England. Of course, Mr. White, you now exonerate *me*."

"As if every one did not!" exclaimed Cyras. "The trouble, Mr. White, has arisen from my careless habits. We colonists are proverbially careless, you know. Making no memorandum of the date, I did not know

the bill was due. I have been spending most of the interval in Paris, where time flies, one forgets how quickly. It will be all right now, and your bill will get paid without your troubling to protest it."

They next called upon the holders of the bill, the Messrs. Jephson, who in their turn were equally surprised; the elder cynically remarking they might have had the wit to know that Cyras was at the bottom of the mischief. And then they went back to Pump Court, where Charles had ordered a substantial supper for Cyras's benefit.

"We don't go in much for eight-o'clock dinners over in New Zealand," remarked Cyras, "but we make up for it in suppers."

Then Cyras grew confidential. He spoke of a certain fair daughter of Mr. Jansen, the second partner in the New Zealand house. She and Cyras were privately engaged; and he declared that if he could only win her he should throw carelessness to the winds and become as steady as old Time.

"Her mother, a well-born Englishwoman, favours it," observed Cyras. "She thinks there must be any amount of latent good in a dean's son. Mr. Jansen opposes it: not that he objects to me personally, but on the score of my want of prospects. He told me point-blank that he would give her to me were I able to become a partner in the firm."

"The difficulty is money, I suppose, Cyras?"

"Just so. Four thousand pounds. They would give me a small share in it for that sum."

"And you have not got it?"

"I have never saved anything."

"And what of the young lady herself?"

"I only wish it rested with her!" answered Cyras. "She would soon be mine. Ah, Charley, if I could only accomplish that partnership, it would make a good man of me and steady me for life. If I have to part from her—well, I don't think I should much care what went with me, or what the end was—perhaps ruin."

Charles was silent. He remembered how passionately he and Cyras had loved each other as boys, although Cyras did put upon him and tyrannize over him; and he asked himself whether he should give up his own marriage for a time and save his brother. He had about two thousand pounds put by; part of it he had saved by degrees, part had come to him by a recent legacy. If he gave that to Cyras, his own marriage must be delayed, but he knew Mary would wait for him. It would be a grievous disappointment to both of them; but should disappointment be placed in comparison with his friendless brother's welfare—his welfare in this world, and, it might be, in that to come? The other two thousand would

no doubt be managed amongst them—possibly by Lord Avon.

"You have not told me her name, Cyras."

"Anna—Anna Jansen. To me the prettiest name in the world. Ah, Charley, if you only knew her!"

Charles fell into deep thought. When supper was over, Cyras brought out his meerschaum again. It was nearly one o'clock when he took his departure. Charles went downstairs with him.

"You have not told me where you are staying, Cyras."

"Here, there, and everywhere. Just now I am at the Tavistock. Good-night, Charley, boy: *à demain.*"

Charles released his hand, and stood a moment to watch him away. Cyras broke into a song as he crossed the flags, regaling the slumbers of Pump Court with the sentiments of the renowned Mr. Paul Clifford:—

"Oh, there never was life like the robber's,
So jolly, so bold, so free!
And its end? Why, a cheer from the crowd below,
And a leap from a leafless tree."

## CHAPTER XV.

### IN EATON PLACE.

Richard Maude-Dynevor, Doctor of Divinity, Canon and Sub-dean of Oldchurch, was seated in his study at his sister's house, Eaton Place, when two young men were shown into it. The sight of the first, Charles Baumgarten, was sufficient to make him spring to his feet, his very shoe-buckles sparkling with wrath.

"Again!" he stuttered. "Do you dare appear in my presence to beard me with your insolence? But for the memory of your father, I would order my servants to put you forth."

"Why, you are more peppery than you used to be, doctor," cried a voice from behind Charles—that of Cyras; who had about as much reverence for a high church dignitary as for a native savage of his adopted land. The canon stretched his stern, dark face round, to see whose bold voice might be thus addressing him. Charles spoke.

"When I assured you I was not at the Haymarket Theatre the other night, sir, you might have trusted my word, after knowing me all these years. It was my brother who was there; and Miss Dynevor was deceived by the resemblance."

The sub-dean gazed at both of them. "What! is it *you?*" he exclaimed. "Come back to trouble England?"

"I am here to honour it and its natives with a visit —you amongst the rest," cried the undaunted Cyras, as he shook the sub-dean's reluctant hand. "Glad to see you in robust health and voice, sir."

The reverend gentleman coughed. Cyras, years ago, had gone in and out of his house like his own boys, and been on the same familiar terms with him. He turned to Charles.

"Then am I to understand that you were not at the theatre, Charles Baumgarten? She insisted that you were there most positively, you know, and she did not allow me to doubt her assertion."

"To be there under the circumstances described would be very unlikely for me," returned Charles. "I think you might have known, sir, that I was not capable of it."

Something like "Plague take her!" escaped the lips of the canon.

"I'm sorry I offended Aunt Ann," said Cyras. "I

hear she looks upon my nodding to her as a personal insult. What if I *had* a lady upon my arm when I nodded? Aunt Ann never liked pretty women, I remember, and that one is pretty beyond common; a star, doctor, of the first water."

For once in his life the sub-dean's fancy was tickled. He enjoyed a side-fling at his sister. And Cyras was, in his opinion, so very lost a sheep that, had he appeared at the play with an army of ladies instead of one, it would have given the sub-dean no manner of concern.

"You had better go to the drawing-room and make it right with them," he said, when the young men had explained about Mrs. Carington and one or two other matters. "Tell Ann all this, and re-establish yourself in her favour."

It may as well be remarked that the likeness between the brothers was not so very astonishing when they were together, or to those who knew them well. A very great resemblance there undoubtedly was, quite sufficient to deceive the jeweller, and Miss Dynevor also, who had no suspicion that Cyras was in England. But to strangers, looking at the two for the first time, the likeness was marvellous.

It chanced that Miss Dynevor was this morning in an exasperated mood, brought on by her ineffectual endeavours to induce Mary to say she would give up

Charles Baumgarten. Her chosen seat when lecturing her nieces was the music-stool. Drawn to the middle of the room, she sat, perched like Jupiter on Olympus, tall and formidable, in a grass-green stiff gown with balloon sleeves, her flaxen curls elaborately arranged and her tongue sharpened.

"It seems to me that the world must be coming to an end," she said, haranguing all three girls in general, but Mary in particular; "and the sooner the better, if this is to be the order of things. In my younger days we modest maidens never so much as looked at an unmarried man; as to talking openly to one, as I have seen you girls doing over and over again, we should have been shut in our rooms for a month after it. While you, Mary Dynevor, scruple not to uphold Charles Baumgarten's conduct the other night!"

"What I say is this, Aunt Ann—that Charles could not behave in the manner you relate," responded Mary, a sound of tears in her voice.

"How dare you insult me by doubting my word?

'I don't doubt your word, aunt; I doubt your eyesight. You mistook some one else for Charles."

Miss Dynevor shrieked. "You insolent girl!—mistook him, did I? When he turned his face impudently towards mine, and grinned and nodded to me! He winked, too; I vow and protest he winked.

The fact is, he must have been making free with some sort of wine."

"He assured me in the presence of papa that it was not himself—that it was a mistake, for he was not out of his chambers at all that night."

"And you believed him!" scoffed Miss Dynevor.

"With my whole heart," warmly returned Mary, a glowing colour dyeing her face. "I would rather die than disbelieve Charles Baumgarten."

"That's a pretty modest avowal!" gasped Miss Dynevor. "You will—— Regina, what on earth are you doing there?"

"Only what you told me to do, Aunt Ann," replied Regina with the utmost apparent innocence, as she held out Miss Dynevor's knitting, nearly the whole of which she had been quietly undoing.

"*I* told you!" shook Miss Dynevor, half beside herself with vexation. "I said to you, 'Do a bit.'"

"Oh, 'Do a bit,'" commented Regina. "I thought you said, 'Undo a bit.' I'm sure I'm very sorry, aunt. It was a night-cap for Archdeacon Duck, wasn't it?"

Aunt Ann's wrath was arrested midway, for Charles and his brother at that moment entered. She knew Cyras at once, and pushed up her wig a little in astonishment. Cyras advanced to the young ladies to greet them in what he called New Zealand custom,

which they found meant neither more nor less than kissing.

When the noise and laughter had subsided, Cyras turned to Miss Dynevor. "May I venture to touch your fingers with the tips of mine, Aunt Ann?"

No response. Miss Dynevor had not recovered from her petrifaction.

"It's only right to ask before presuming," went on Cyras; "because, you know, at the play the other night you looked as though you wanted to annihilate me."

However annihilating Miss Dynevor might have looked the other night, she looked very foolish now. Cyras standing before her with his gay glances, Grace and Regina enjoying her discomfiture, and Mary drawing nearer to Charles, as if it were her own sheltering place, a happy smile on her eye and lip.

Miss Dynevor's temper was exceedingly acid just then. "The sub-dean forbade you the house," she said sharply to Charles. "Do you set him at defiance?"

"The sub-dean!" interrupted Cyras. "My dear lady, we have been making ourselves comfortable with the sub-dean in his study for this half-hour. He sent us to you here that we might do the same with you."

There was no daunting Cyras. Miss Dynevor

demanded whether he knew the meaning of the word "impudence," and why he had presumed to address her that night under such very doubtful circumstances.

"The circumstances will bear the strictest investigation," laughed Cyras. "The lady I escorted to the theatre is charming, and one of my very good friends. I'll bring her to see you, if you like."

"Mary," whispered Charles, whilst Aunt Ann was striving to frame a fitting answer to this last most astounding proposition, "they did not make you doubt me?"

"Never, Charles."

"Were it my case," spoke Regina, boldly, "I should get married at once, and live upon cold mutton and barley water until Charley's briefs came in more quickly. You may be parted for good, if you don't, by some plausible tale or other. One never knows what may happen."

A soft flush lighted Mary's cheek; cold mutton and barley water bore no doubtful prospect for her. But Charles sighed deeply. He could carry out Regina's suggestion, and add something to it even, upon his present briefs—he knew that; but then—how was he to help Cyras?

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE SUB-DEAN CONDESCENDS.

In one of the pleasant rooms at Avon House, its windows open to the lawn, to the scent of the flowers and the sound of the bees, harbingers of the approaching summer, there stood a group of fair people. We know most of them. Cyras and Charles had travelled down that morning to Great Whitton; and Charles had whispered to his mother all about Cyras's prospects of the partnership and of Anna Jansen, and of how he meant to help him. It did not please Lady Grace. Cyras had stepped outside.

"Don't tell me, Charles. I know Cyras. If you help him to-day, he'll need help again to-morrow."

"That is rather unjust, mother mine. Cyras has needed no help from us up to this very day. He did not ask for it now. I think you have always misjudged him a little. You never loved him as you loved me and Gertrude."

"How could I?" somewhat sharply rejoined Lady

Grace. "Another loved him more than all, if I did not —his father."

"Well, I feel that we ought to help him to this chance, mother," said Charles. "I will do my part to it, and perhaps Uncle Henry will do the rest. It seems to me to lie in our duty—at least, in mine. Come hither, Gertrude; tell mamma what your opinion is. You have been listening to our conversation."

Gertrude Baumgarten came forward, a tenderness in her blue eyes. She knelt at her mother's knee—a half-playful, half-fond position she had always rather favoured—and spoke in a low, sweet tone.

"I have been listening, as Charles says, mamma. I am sure he considers it right that this help should be given to Cyras."

'And what is your opinion, Gertrude?" demanded Lady Grace. "They are both your brothers; Charles in a nearer degree than Cyras."

"My opinion is that it would be a sin not to help Cyras. If Charles is willing to do so, why oppose it, mamma? I only wish," she earnestly added, "that it was in my power to do it."

"Are you doing penance, Gertrude?" suddenly exclaimed a rich, mellow voice from the door of the room; and Gertrude rose laughingly to face Sir Everard Wilmot.

"I am not convinced," exclaimed Lady Grace.

"You are both of you misled by your affection for Cyras. I wonder what you would say, Sir Everard?" And she put the case before him in a few words.

Sir Everard listened, and laughed a little. "That must have been Cyras I saw flying over the grass just now," he remarked. "Well, as to the matter under discussion, of course it would be a very great sacrifice for Charley to have to delay his marriage; but—there are worse misfortunes at sea even than this."

He was so evidently amused that Lady Grace looked up.

"Undoubtedly Cyras must be helped. Four thousand pounds! Why, it's nothing; a mere bagatelle."

"To you it may be, Sir Everard," retorted Lady Grace, compressing her lips, "but not to others."

"Then suppose I take it upon myself," he laughed, in a tone which might be meant for jest or earnest. "Charley can keep his two thousand pounds in his own pocket."

"Charley is in debt himself, I'm afraid," severely remarked Lady Grace.

"No, I am not, mother," he answered quickly. "It was all a mistake, and has been set right."

"I said it must be," cried Gertrude.

Lord Avon and Cyras entered together; Cyras full of merriment. He had been enlightening the earl

upon the whole past mystery, winding up his account with a humorous description of his interview with Miss Dynevor in Eaton Place. Lady Grace spoke a few words freely, which served to check the young man's laughter.

"What?" he exclaimed, "Charles is to hand over his savings to me and defer his marriage with Mary? No, that he shall not. Why, you can't think I would let him do it! I used to put upon Charley as a boy, but I will never do so as a man. I loved him then, and I love him still."

"Not even to help you to the partnership and to Miss Anna Jansen?" laughed Sir Everard.

"Not even for that. Not if it would help me to every good in the world. How on earth could it have entered any one's head?"

"Do you remember me, Cyras?"

Cyras only smiled in answer, as he looked at Sir Everard. Their hands met in a warm clasp.

"Will you accept the money from me, Cyras?"

"From *you!*"

"You helped me once, though not with money. Suffer me to help you now."

"Don't fret yourselves into fiddlestrings, you young people," spoke up Lord Avon, in his indifferent way, from the depths of an easy-chair. "I will see to Cyras."

"Not in this instance, Avon," said Sir Everard, decision in his tone. "Don't you understand that I owe him a debt, and that I would repay it?"

"I will take it as a loan from you," said Cyras, in a low tone of feeling.

"All right," laughed the baronet. "Then it's all settled."

"And I hope you will make it the turning-point in your life, Cyras," said Lady Grace, "and become as steady as Charles is."

Cyras laid down a spray of lilac he had brought in, and spoke with emotion. "I promise you that it shall be so—by the memory of my dead father."

Very shortly after this a double wedding took place in London; for Gertrude Baumgarten and Mary Dynevor were married at the same time. Everything went off with great success, and Lord Avon gave Gertrude away. Cyras remained in England for it; he was in high form, and insisted upon kissing not only the brides in church, but the bridesmaids afterwards at the breakfast. He had squared up his accounts, and would sail the following day for New Zealand, leaving a promise that when he came again his wife should be with him.

The sub-dean condescended to perform the marriage ceremony for both parties; and Miss Dynevor honoured

the company in a new flaxen wig and a bird of paradise, a very magnificent specimen which Cyras had specially procured for her from some island in the Southern seas with an unpronounceable name.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CYRILLA.

THE story of Cyrilla, Dr. Maude-Dynevor's eldest daughter, has been left to the last, to be told apart, for it is worth a place to itself. Her history was far more eventful than that of any one of her sisters; sadness, sorrow, and romance being mingled with it. And the reader must be good enough to understand that its commencement will carry us back some years.

The clergy had assembled in the large room called the Chapter House, making ready to attend afternoon service in the cathedral, that of Oldchurch, the bell for which was ringing. Standing in the cloisters, on either side the great doors of the Chapter House, two bedesmen kept guard; looking in their black gowns not unlike two mutes, as still and as solemn. As the cathedral clock tolled the first stroke of the hour, three, and the bell ceased and the organ sounded, they pushed open the doors, and, bending down their

bodies in obeisance to the clergy, turned sharply round, and preceded them along the cloisters into the cathedral. The dean was first; only two prebendaries followed him, Dr. Maude and Mr. Lane: not a great show of the higher dignitaries would the cathedral present that afternoon: they were in their white robes and carried their trenchers. Crossing the cathedral from the opposite door, which was the grand northern entrance, so as to meet them in the nave, came the bishop, marshalled by a verger bearing his silver mace. The bishop fell into his place before the dean. The procession was next augmented by the minor canons and choristers, and finally passed on to the choir.

Ideas have changed of late years, but in the days of which the earlier portion of this story treats, the inner life of a cathedral might be said to comprise a daily history. The pomp would alone have constituted it. The appellation generally applied to its upper clergy, that of "high dignitary," was indeed borne out by most of them in idea and manner. Some few of them were simple-hearted and Christian-minded as are any of the good men of these later times; but for the most part pomp and pride reigned—the besetting sins. Entrenched within their high clerical position, endorsing it with the undue and exalted view accorded to it by the public, some of those reserved and haughty

prebendaries would scarcely deign to acknowledge the respectful salutation of a minor canon as they passed each other in the street, and held it to be quite a condescension to do so. You may be slow to believe it now, but I am telling you truth; and many an aged living clergyman, attached to a cathedral as minor canon in his younger days, could bear ample testimony to it. As a rule, the prebendaries looked down on the minor canons as though they were of a totally inferior race of beings to themselves, and they never associated with them in private life. Minor canons took it all as a matter of course; it was a state of society they had been reared to respect, and they never thought of rebelling against it. At that time the prebendaries (or canons, but the latter name was rarely applied then to the higher clergy) attached to Oldchurch Cathedral numbered ten; the minor canons eight. "Honorary canons"—a sort of distinction sprung up in more recent years—were then unknown.

Proudest amid the proud Chapter of Oldchurch was the Reverend Richard Maude-Dynevor, Doctor of Divinity, canon and sub-dean of the cathedral. A dark, stern, ugly man, who walked with his head thrown back, and carried his ambition in every line of his haughty face. As he stepped into his stall, the first on the left hand in entering the choir, which was

the stall set apart for the sub-dean, he held his trencher for an instant before his face, and then threw his glances around to see who might be present that Sunday afternoon. It was a dark day early in November. Quite a cloud of dimness seemed to overhang the choir, but the prebendary's eyes were keen.

They rested on a row of clergymen who were sitting in the stalls in a line with the officiating minor canon. Five of them. That they did not belong to the cathedral was evident, by their not wearing surplices. They were all young men, the eldest of them not exceeding thirty. The one who sat next the chanter had a pale, serious face; its expression good, and its smile one of remarkable sweetness and beauty. A large open brow was his, proclaiming its own powerful intellect; his hair and his pleasant eyes were of the same shade—brown. He was the Reverend John Hartley. Dr. Maude and other habitués of the college knew these young clergymen to be candidates for the vacant minor canonry. Three of them were curates in the neighbourhood; the other two held small livings in the town. There was no obligation whatever for them, as candidates, to attend the cathedral service, but it happened that they had all accidentally done so that Sunday afternoon.

Underneath the sub-dean, in the pew appropriated

to the ladies of his family, sat his eldest daughter, Cyrilla: a fair, attractive girl, with blue eyes, strangely sweet and thoughtful in their earnestness. She had come in just before the cathedral clergy, and, as she rose from her knees, her eyes encountered those of the Reverend Mr. Hartley. No salute might pass—it was neither the time nor the place for it: but a half-smile illumined his countenance, and she blushed vividly. Had any of the gossips around chanced to see that blush, they might have suspected something from it. It was a good thing Dr. Maude did not. As was stated earlier, the two names were rarely accorded to Dr. Maude-Dynevor. At Oldchurch he was more frequently called by the former one: his late wife, Miss Maude, with whom he took the name, having been a native of the city.

An excellent chanter was on duty that week, the best chanter of all the minor canons. As those five minor canons in embryo—or at least, in hope—listened to the clear tones of his ringing voice, they trembled for their chance of success. Not one among them would ever become such a chanter as that. "Save Hartley," they repeated to themselves; "he may." Perhaps Mr. Hartley was repeating the same. By the side of Cyrilla Maude-Dynevor sat two of her sisters, Caroline and Regina, much younger than herself; two others, Mary and Grace, younger still, were in the

gallery with the governess. Not one resembled her: they for the most part took after the sub-dean, some more, some less—were dark, and cold, and pretentious. Cyrilla and Mary alone were fair, like their dead mother.

The service drew to a close. It was rather prolonged that wintry afternoon, for the anthem had been a long one: and when the bishop rose in his throne to give the blessing, the shades of twilight had fallen on the cathedral.

Under cover of the crowd pressing out, under cover of the friendly darkness, Mr. Hartley grasped and momentarily retained the hand of Miss Maude-Dynevor, as they passed though the choir-gates into the transept.

"I have had a letter from Edmund, Cyrilla," he whispered.

"Have you!" she exclaimed in a tone of delight, her sweet blue eyes raised for an instant, and then dropped again, strangely timid, and her face glowing. "How is he?"

"Very well in health; very ill in temper," returned Mr. Hartley, with a half-smile. "You remember the storms of indignation he used to fall into? He was in one when he wrote."

"Oh, John! At what?"

"At me. Never was such a thing heard of, he

protests, as for John Hartley to aspire to a minor canonry. He——"

"*Aspire?*" interrupted Cyrilla.

"To *stoop* to aspire to it, is, I believe, what he would imply," replied Mr. Hartley, with a glance at Cyrilla. "He writes in mockery. He looks upon a minor canonry as a death-blow to all ambitious hopes; and says he would as soon hear that I had got into hot water with the bishop, and had had my gown threatened."

"That is so like Edmund! But I—I do not myself think a minor canonry is quite the proper preferment for you," she continued, the glow deepening to a crimson with her inward thoughts, and, possibly, with the construction the words might bear to his ear.

"Let us rather say, Cyrilla, it is not the sort of preferment we were fond of carving out for ourselves, I, and Edmund, and Tom Chatterton, in those dear old days at Berton Rectory. True. We were all to rise like stars in the firmament, silk aprons being, I verily believe, at the end of the vista. Experience has come to us since. Tom is wearing out his health in the West Indies, preaching to the negroes; I am vegetating upon a hundred a-year at my curacy; and Edmund, the best off, has his fellowship and his small college living. And, so far as I am concerned, this state of things seems likely to last for ever. A minor canonry

would be an improvement on this: I should, at any rate, be sure of a living with it, large or small, as may be."

"Not large ever. Moderate, at the best."

"Large to us curates," he returned, with a smile.

In talking they had left the college for the cloisters, and were close to the door of the Chapter House. Dr. Maude-Dynevor, who, with his fellow-prebend and the dean, had been marshalled to it by the bedesmen, in like manner that he had been marshalled from it, came suddenly out, his surplice and hood on still, and his trencher on his head.

A haughty recognition of Mr. Hartley's salutation, a hard and somewhat surprised stare at his daughter greeted them. Cyrilla bowed her adieu to Mr. Hartley and joined her father. They walked side by side to the west quadrangle and entered their house by a small door opening from the cloisters.

"Where are the rest?" inquired the sub-dean, alluding to his other daughters.

"With Miss James, papa. They left by the front-entrance."

Since Cyrilla was eighteen and had been emancipated from the care of a governess herself—some three or four years ago now—she had been in the habit of spending much time at Berton Rectory. It was about ten miles from Oldchurch. The Rector, Mr. Chatterton,

was a plain, unaffected country parson, not in the least like that eminent and grand cathedral light, Dr. Maude-Dynevor, or aspiring to be so. The Rector's wife and the late Mrs. Maude-Dynevor were sisters, and Cyrilla was a great favourite at the Rectory. It was much to be feared that Cyrilla's mind, taste, and manners had been formed after her uncle and aunt's simple model, but her father did not suspect the heresy yet. John Hartley had had his title to orders at Berton; when the year was ended, he still remained on, Mr. Chatterton's curate. The sub-dean's eldest son, Edmund, who did not resemble his pretentious father in any way, but had all the sweet gentleness which had characterized his mother, was also at Berton Rectory a great deal, reading with the son, Tom Chatterton, both before college and after it. All three of these young men were at Oxford together, and a great friendship existed between them. Cyrilla naturally saw much of them: and why not? One was her brother, one her cousin, the other—well, he was her uncle's curate. It never would have entered the proud head of Dr. Dynevor to suppose it possible that any harm could accrue to *his* daughter from the companionship. He would as soon have supposed Cyrilla capable of stooping to regard with favour her uncle's gardener, as her uncle's son or her uncle's curate. And, for the matter of that, had he con-

descended to think about any one so inferior in the social scale as John Hartley, Dr. Dynevor would have assumed that Cyrilla's intercourse with him was limited to viewing him in the reading-desk on Sundays.

Not so, however. They met daily; at the Rectory and out of it they were often together; and—he was attractive and so was she. The usual consequences of such companionship ensued, and they became to each other all too dear. John Hartley and Cyrilla Dynevor had fallen in love with one another for all time.

The only one to detect it—and that not at first—was Edmund Dynevor. He was quite devoid of pride—it has been already said—and he liked John Hartley better than any other man in the world. So that, far from seeing anything to be vexed at, he was ready and willing to countenance the treason, and did so.

"Now, don't you two go open-mouthed to the canon, like geese, Hartley—you and Cyrilla," he suddenly spoke out one day in his abrupt fashion. "If you do, you'll just get yourselves damaged for good. You will be sent to the right-about, John, and mademoiselle to the left. Wait. A tide comes to every man in life we are told, or ought to come, and when you rise upon yours, Hartley—and I don't think you are a man to be buried all your life under a

bushel, a fair share of chance being given you—why, then enlighten his reverence. Tell him now that you and Cyrilla would like to pull together in the same boat!—whew! I should not like to stand in your shoes, Hartley, if you did. You do not know Richard Maude-Dynevor, D.D."

Mr. Hartley had probably entertained no more intention of speaking to Dr. Dynevor than of speaking to the Pope of Rome: under present circumstances he would not have dared to do it, and the address took him by surprise. At least, it served to open his eyes; to bring matters more practically before them. Honourable in his every instinct, he had not dreamt of speaking to Cyrilla. Perhaps he had never looked into the depths of his own heart and seen the love hidden there. Its consciousness had been all-sufficient for him, making his days a heaven. He had not spoken to Cyrilla; he did not speak now. They tacitly understood each other: when he should get preferment then he would ask for her.

So the years had gone on to the present time. Mr. Hartley was eight-and-twenty, Cyrilla six years younger; and the preferment had not come. He had another curacy now, close to Oldchurch, and he and Cyrilla often met in society. When Edmund was at home—he did pay it an occasional visit—Mr. Hartley would be much at the prebendal residence. The canon

—*for* the canon—was gracious to him; as gracious as a high and bedizened butterfly of the Church could be to a working grub of a curate. Dr. Maude could not have regarded a man without high friends and high interest in any other light than condescendingly. Edmund kept counsel and silence, and the canon never suspected the dreadful treason going on under his very nose.

Eight-and-twenty years of age now—"going on for thirty," as he was wont to put it to himself—and no sign of preferment! Would it ever come? John Hartley, wanting interest, thought not. The passing years might have seemed longer than they had but for his love for Cyrilla. Men are vain; young men very vain; young clergymen sometimes vainest of all; and it did appear feasible to John Hartley that, should a lucky living of five or six hundred a-year drop down upon him, Dr. Maude-Dynevor might not refuse him his eldest daughter.

But the luck and the living, I say, did not come. Neither could he disguise from himself that he had no more interest to get it than had a hundred other poor curates in the diocese of Oldchurch. Certainly, he was personally known to the bishop; and if he by chance encountered that Right Reverend divine, his lordship would freely nod and say, "How are you, Hartley?" He had even been known to shake his

hand. For the bishop was not on the high ropes, as some of the canons were; he was very different. But, as to setting the young man down for a benefice, nothing appeared to be further from the prelate's thoughts.

During this gloomy state of affairs one of the minor canons died, and Mr. Hartley decided to enter himself as a candidate for the vacant place. A fatal step, so far as his pretensions to Miss Maude-Dynevor went; but John Hartley, a stranger till lately to a cathedral town, did not yet quite understand the feeling obtaining amidst the high cathedral dignitaries. He could not have placed a surer bar between himself and Cyrilla. Dr. Dynevor give a daughter to a minor canon! The doctor would have thought the world was coming to an end had any brother-prebend committed so unpardonable an anomaly.

Edmund Dynevor, at home in cathedral and local politics, knew this. Hence his disapproval of the project. Reared as he had been in the prejudices of a cathedral life, he could but be in a degree imbued with them, in spite of the frankness of his nature; and he would not like to see a sister of his stoop to marry a minor canon. A country clergyman with ever so small a living, an' she would; but not one of the lesser clergy attached to Oldchurch Cathedral. Neither would he like to see his friend a minor canon

for his own sake; and on the spur of the moment, upon hearing the news, he wrote him a strong letter —the one Mr. Hartley spoke of to Cyrilla in the cathedral.

John Hartley did not, himself, see matters in this light. He thought Edmund was prejudiced. Some of the livings in the gift of the dean and chapter for bestowal on the minor canons were good; should one of the good ones be given to him, he fondly thought it might lead to his union with Cyrilla. That he should be the successful candidate for the minor canonry he had little doubt of, on account of his good voice and his talent for chanting. Success or non-success depended almost entirely upon that.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### IN THE MOONLIT CLOISTERS.

THE day came—that of the trial for the minor canonry—Tuesday. The time fixed for it was, as usual in such cases, immediately after morning prayers in the cathedral. The dean and prebendaries—four—were present, several of the minor canons, the lay-clerks and choristers—and the ordeal began. The five candidates did their best; but on the whole the "best" was not very good.

A sorry display made some of those reverend aspirant chanters. What with their nervousness, and what with their not being fitted by nature with voice and ear, two or three might have stood quite as much chance had they put up for the bishopric. One of them surreptitiously used a tuning-fork to pitch the note. But the Reverend John Hartley was different. His voice was one of the utmost melody; it rang into the nooks and corners of the old college. No nervousness betrayed he; he knew, in his calm self-possession,

that he could do the work well, and he did it. "An admirable chanter," remarked the dean; "one might think he had served his apprenticeship to it." The next best to him was the Reverend Mr. Pope. He held a small living in Oldchurch, and had been feeing the young chorister-boys to be at his house three evenings a-week, to practise with him. The result in his case was passable, or would have been deemed so had John Hartley not first been heard.

Of course there could be but one opinion—that the place had been earned by Mr. Hartley; and some whispered congratulations were paid him. The clergy expressed no opinion openly: that would be declared later. As the dean and chapter were leaving the cathedral to put off their robes, they met the bishop in the cloisters. A bishop—it need hardly be said—has nothing to do with the cathedral appointments; neither is it etiquette for him to influence them.

"We have been hearing the candidates for the minor canonry," remarked the dean, who was an elderly man. "Young Hartley carries the palm by a long way."

"Your lordship would be surprised to hear him," added Mr. Lane. "There's not a better chanter in the college."

"He'll do, he'll do," said the bishop, assuming that Mr. Hartley was positively fixed upon. "An orthodox

young fellow is Hartley; clever too—got his head set on his shoulders the right way."

Cold, and still, and silent lay the old cloisters in the moonlight. Not that much moonlight could get at *them;* but it fell brightly on the graveyard they enclosed—on the dank green grass and the worn tombstones.

Pacing in that ghostly spot, over the flat gravestones sunk in the cloisters, the inscriptions on which had worn away with time, was the Reverend John Hartley, the light not being sufficient to show him which were the red bricks of the cloisters, which the grey slabs of the dead. Do you cavil at the word, ghostly? Go and try it. Get yourself shut into the cloisters at Oldchurch some night: with the ponderous Gothic building around; the popular superstitions—or, associations, if the word be liked better—connected with the hour and place; the ominous silence telling upon the nerves; the heavy bell aloft, which every quarter booms out the flitting time; the dead, mouldering around and beneath; the snatches of moonlight, flickering upon the white graves in the open yard, and entering through the mullioned, unglazed casements! Not a soul within hearing, not a soul within call; ghostly and grim it is altogether.

The clock rang out the three-quarters past five.

As the echo of it died away another sound arose, and Mr. Hartley arrested his monotonous steps to listen. It was what he was waiting for. Mr. Lane's door opened—for that prebendal residence had likewise a door conducting into the cloisters, it being on the east side, or opposite to Dr. Maude's. The door opened and shut; and then fleet, light footsteps were heard coming round towards where he stood—footsteps that John Hartley loved all too well.

"Cyrilla!"

Softly as the word was spoken, it yet startled her to terror: she had not caught its familiar tones. A faint cry, and she sprang to the wall of the narrow cloister. Mr. Hartley caught hold of her in his reassuring protection.

"Forgive me, Cyrilla. I never meant to startle you."

"Oh, John! What brings you here at this hour? I thought—I thought——"

Her heart was beating violently with the alarm, and she stopped to gather breath. Mr. Hartley laughed.

"Thought it was one of the dead-and-gone monks, come out of his sleep to molest you? I was in the precincts at dusk, and saw you go into Mr. Lane's house with his daughter. Logic whispered me that you might probably run home through the cloisters,

in preference to going round; and I came in and waited, dodging the cloister-porter when he shuffled in to lock the gates."

"Dodging the—why, yes! They are shut at dusk in winter! John, you must be locked in!" she exclaimed in consternation. "How ever shall you get out?"

"I must trust to luck for it: luck has stood my friend in worse predicaments than this. You will stay with me five minutes?" he continued, placing her arm within his, and commencing slowly to pace the cloister.

A pause. Her heart—beating though it was with the sense of happiness—suggested that it was not quite the thing to do. "Ought you to ask it of me, John? It would not be right."

"Not right," he echoed. "Where is the wrong? Who would protect you from harm as I would? No man living. You know it, Cyrilla."

"It is not that," she hastily replied. "But—oh, if any one should come and see me here!"

"How can they?—with the cloisters locked for the night! I have been trying to see you all day, Cyrilla. I received another letter from Edmund this morning. Did you also get one?"

Had that moonlight shone on them instead of on the gravestones, Mr. Hartley would have seen the

bright blush that the question called up on her cheeks. She made no answer.

"Did you, Cyrilla?"

Still no reply. She walked by his side with her head down, as if mindful of where she placed her feet. He caused her to take his arm.

"A terrible bugbear, this minor canonry business is to Edmund," resumed Mr. Hartley. "He urges the bar it will be to other preferment. And he does not —he says he does not," repeated Mr. Hartley, pointedly —"object to it so strongly on the score of its own merits or demerits, or altogether for my own sake."

Thump, thump, went Cyrilla's heart against her side. She understood all perfectly well: yet what was she to answer?

"Therefore, Cyrilla, I determined to appeal to you —were it possible that I could see you in time—and ask you to decide. Hence my waylaying you in this unceremonious, and I fear you think unpardonable, fashion. You may have heard the result of the trial this morning—that I am sure of the post: the dean and chapter as good as let me know that without saying so, thanks to my chanting. If you would prefer me not to take it, I will go this night to the dean, and say that I withdraw from the competition. Decide for me, Cyrilla."

"*I* see no objection to the minor canonry," she

replied in a low tone; and she spoke as she felt, for in truth Cyrilla was humble-minded. "Only——" She came to a standstill.

'Only that you fear it will be a stumbling-block in the sight of Dr. Dynevor. It is Edmund's implied argument, Cyrilla; I must speak plainly—though you may deem it not generous of me to do so, here and now. It is but a word that I will say. You know that my whole heart is bent upon one hope; that I am ever working on for its realization; and you know what that hope is. There, that is all; I will not say another word, until I can say it to a purpose. What shall I do about the minor canonry?"

"I think you should accept it. Edmund did write to me. But it is cruel of any one to wish you to starve on as you are doing, on a hundred a-year."

"Never mind the starving," he interrupted. "It is not that which troubles me. But, years are wearing on. Some of the minor canons hold better livings than your uncle's at Berton; the best of them, report says, come up to five or six hundred a-year."

"Yes; two or three do, John; they are very good. And perhaps—perhaps papa would remember that they are."

"And I could resign the minor canonry at any time if higher preferment offered. Do not deem me mercenary, Cyrilla, in calculating these chances," he con-

tinued in a pained tone, "or think I regard them as the end a minister of God should work for. But a man must live—and his wife also."

"I would take the minor canonry, John; yes, I think I would, and chance it. And——"

"Who goes there, pray?"

The words, shouted out almost close to them, were in the terrible voice—terrible to their ears, then—of Dr. Dynevor! He had stayed in the Chapter House after afternoon service to consult one of its ponderous folios, had lighted the solitary candle kept there, and remained, poring over the volume, until reminded by hunger that the dinner hour must be at hand. He then blew out the light and came forth. They, those two lovers on the opposite side of the cloisters, buried in their own affairs, their untold love, had never heard him; their own echoing steps had obscured the sound of his. The sub-dean had no dea, when, on turning the angle, he distinguished two people pacing together, that the intruders were—who they were. But he called out angrily: for no one, save the great college lights, like himself, had any business in the cloisters at that hour.

It was a scene of confused surprise; and the moonlight just then was very bright. Cyrilla, nearly fainting with dismay, would have quitted Mr. Hartley's arm, but he did not let her. "Better so," he whispered;

"he must hear all now." As to the canon, for once in his life he was too much astonished even to storm.

John Hartley, his tall form drawn to its full height, briefly explained. He was a gentleman always; and gentlemen do not cower, even before a sub-dean. The blame was his, not Miss Maude-Dynevor's, he said. He had been in the cloisters a few minutes ago, had seen Miss Dynevor running across them on her way home from Mr. Lane's, and detained her. And then he entered on the story of his love and his hopes.

"*What* is it that you say?" gasped the doctor. "That you—that you—presume——" He broke off from lack of words.

"That I love her, sir. That I have loved her ever since we were so much together at Berton—that my most earnest prayer is to be worthy of her, and to win her."

"Let me pass," panted the canon, his face purple and crimson, his hair standing on end under his trencher. "As for you, degenerate girl! you may choose between me and him."

She burst into tears. "Oh, papa!——"

"Sir, I have assured you that no blame attaches to Miss Dynevor. She is perfectly dutiful, and willing to wait——"

"Will you go home?" stamped the doctor to his

daughter, waving off Mr. Hartley with contemptuous scorn, overpowering his words, shrinking from him in his hauteur as he might have shrunk from some worthless miscreant. "To your home, I say, Miss Maude-Dynevor."

Cyrilla, sobs bursting from her, pushed open the door and entered. The sub-dean was following in her wake.

"Will you not condescend to give me a reply, sir?" interposed John Hartley.

"A reply to you! How dare you, fellow? Begone!"

It was all the answer Dr. Dynevor vouchsafed. He slammed the door in Mr. Hartley's face, leaving him to his fate in the cold cloisters. Striding along the passage after his daughter, he caught her by the arm and whirled her into his study.

"Oh, papa! papa! why should you be so angry?" she ventured to cry, the tears streaming from her eyes. "What harm has he done? He is of gentle birth; he is a learned and good man; and he will not always be a curate."

Dr. Dynevor almost fought for breath. "A curate!" said he, in his bitter contempt. "He is going to be a minor canon!"

Cyrilla's heart rose against the implied contumely. "Papa, a minor canon may rise, he may not always

remain one. Oh, sir, do be just! Mr. Hartley does not deserve your displeasure; indeed he does not."

The sub-dean stared at her. Cyrilla! who had always done his bidding in meekness!—who was the most dutiful of all his children!—she, to beard him! "Possibly you were contemplating a union with this minor canon?" foamed he.

Her cheeks grew red through her tears.

"Answer me."

"Had he obtained a sufficient living, he might have asked me to become his wife. My doing so would have depended upon your consent, papa."

The sub-dean opened his mouth and closed it again; he did not know whether to believe his ears. "Marry a minor canon!" he exclaimed, in a kind of fear—for in truth all the chords of pride within him were jarred. "Are you mad?"

"Papa, you need not fear," she sobbed. "I would not marry him without your approbation: neither would he take me."

"He would take my curse if he did. And *you* would take it also."

"Oh, do not, do not!" she implored in a wailing tone, putting her hand before her eyes. "I can give him up without that. Papa, did you not understand me? I said that it depended only on you."

"Very well, Cyrilla; I take you at your word," was

the rejoinder, sternly but less angrily expressed, after a pause of consideration. "Let it end from this night. What is the matter?"

Emotion had been taking Cyrilla's strength away. White and trembling, she leaned against a chair for support.

"You frightened me, papa—speaking of a curse. It is a dreadful thing."

"A father's curse is an unholy thing," amended the sub-dean. "Do not you provoke it."

She was leaving the room, when all the future desolation that she now must enter upon rose up vividly before her mind. She turned back, her hands clasped, and speaking slowly and softly:

"There is no one else I can ever care for in the world. Papa, is there *no* medium? Will you not say a word of hope—that, in years to come, should preferment be his——"

"Preferment for him!" interrupted the sub-dean. "Preferment for a man without connections, without interest!—the kind of preferment that would entitle him to aspire to *my* daughter! *Is* it likely that such will ever be his? You know it is not. Our minor canons must wed in their own sphere."

A sobbing sigh caught her breath. She knew that hope was over. "He is——"

"I tell you to think no more of him, Cyrilla," again

came the stern interruption. "Never more, under pain of—you heard the penalty."

"I will obey you, papa; you know I will. I was only about to say that he is locked up in the cloisters: the gates were shut, he said. Will you not send a servant to tell the porter?"

This was the climax. Dr. Dynevor firmly closed his lips to prevent their further explosion, flung the door back, and pointed to the staircase. The unhappy girl shivered as she went slowly up it.

Looking at the matter from the sub-dean's point of view, remembering the pride and prejudice he was entrenched in round about, it must be admitted that for his anger there was much excuse to be made. He deemed that Mr. Hartley's conduct in regard to his daughter had been mean, dishonourable, bad. How dared he, an obscure and portionless curate, dream of aspiring to an alliance with Cyrilla? Why, even this evening, the fellow must have put himself into the cloisters to waylay her! Which was true.

"Send to tell the porter, indeed! Let him get out as he got in!" spoke the sub-dean.

Dr. Dynevor sat down to his dinner with a damaged appetite. Cyrilla did not appear at it. She was the only one who took dinner with the canon; her sisters dined with the governess. When he had finished he sat awhile, reflecting as he sipped his wine; then he

betook himself to the deanery, and to the houses of the canons who were in town. He had business at them all.

The decision as to the minor canonry was announced on the following day, and became patent to Oldchurch. It was conferred upon the Reverend William Pope, M.A. Mr. Hartley was passed over; his name was not so much as mentioned. Those not in the secret were astonished; none more so than Mr. Pope himself.

"I understood you to say that Hartley was the best man," observed the bishop to Mr. Lane, when they chanced to meet in the street that afternoon.

"So he was, in regard to chanting," was the canon's answer. "But after the trial, at the eleventh hour, in fact, Dr. Dynevor spoke of some private objection he has to Hartley, and put it to us, as a personal favour to himself, not to elect him. Pope will do very well. He will chant better when he gets used to it."

Now it fell out that, within an hour after this, the bishop encountered Mr. Hartley, who was digesting the news of his rejection, as well as that of another rejection, conveyed to him in a letter from Cyrilla. The bishop stopped him. Never a pleasanter prelate than he; never one less formal in manner, or more friendly. He was the first, or very nearly the first, who discarded the wig: the Episcopal bench, it was well known, looked askance at him for it. Some of

them thought him rather "light" for a bishop. At a certain musical festival, held at Oldchurch in those old days, a certain prima donna, gay and fascinating, was engaged to sing. The bishop strolled in at rehearsal, and passed an hour agreeably, listening to the music, and chattering between whiles to madame. "Of course you will go to the ball?" said he, alluding to the fête with which the festival would conclude. "Ah, no," responded madame, "I shall have had enough of fa—tigue without that." "But you ought to go," returned his lordship, gallantly; "what will the ball be without you?" "I will go," said madame, "if your lordship will come also, and promise to waltz with me." No great harm, all this: it was his lordship's way. He was thoroughly liked by all around him. Never a more popular prelate than was he of Oldchurch: presenting an entire contrast to the straitlaced Bishop of Denham. Had it been this one to discover those pretty syrens on Charles Baumgarten's blotting-pad—but we need not go into that question now.

"What's this I hear, Hartley?" cried the bishop. "How have you contrived to get into the black books of the dean and chapter?"

Mr. Hartley blushed like a lady. "I fancy it is with one of the chapter only, my lord," he answered.

"Well—what's the reason?"

"It has nothing to do with clerical affairs, my lord. Nothing whatever to do with my fitness, or unfitness, for the post. I offended Dr. Maude in a private matter—and I conclude he has not allowed me to be elected."

"A private matter?" debated the bishop. "Perhaps," he continued, noting the changing complexion of the handsome young curate, and remembering that he had sometimes seen him with Dr. Maude's daughter, and he laughed as he spoke, "perhaps you have been aspiring to Miss Maude—as well as to the minor canonry—and the doctor does not like it?"

No need for John Hartley to say Yes, or No; his conscious face betrayed him. He saw that the bishop read the signs correctly; and in his pain he spoke words that he might not otherwise have spoken.

"Dr. Maude might look further for a suitor and fare worse than in me, my lord; so far as a true and honest heart goes."

"So he might, Hartley; I do believe he might. Well, I must bear you in mind for something else—as the dean and chapter have rejected you."

"I beg your lordship's pardon—I think I shall leave the town; go somewhere to a distance. I do not care to remain here now."

The bishop looked at him. The bishop was evidently pondering something in his mind. "I

wonder," he slowly said, "what sort of a tutor you would make? You took honours at Oxford, I think?"

"I am pleased that your lordship should remember it."

"A friend has asked me to recommend him a resident tutor for his son. Suppose you call at the palace, and I will talk to you further. Let me see?—come to-morrow morning at half-past nine."

John Hartley thanked his lordship, lifted his hat, and the bishop passed on. He did not fail to attend at the palace at the appointed time, and was kept there in long conference by the bishop. The result was, that in less than a fortnight's time John Hartley had obtained the tutorship spoken of—one in the family of the Earl of Saxonby—and had resigned his curacy, which he was enabled to do at once.

It was a chilly evening. Cyrilla was seated over the fire after dinner—which she had taken alone, for the sub-dean had gone to the great audit-feast at the deanery, and her sisters dined with the governess—and she was shivering slightly. For the past week or two she had been unaccountably given to shivering. She was dwelling upon her unhappy fate, perhaps somewhat rebelling at it, when the door opened and Mr. Hartley was shown in. He had come to the

house with as bold a face as the bishop himself might have come: but Cyrilla started up in consternation.

"I have called to take my leave of you, Cyrilla. Your father would scarcely grudge us so much as that."

They shook hands; and then she stood, looking from him to the misty fire, misty through her tears. "It was wrong to come, John," were her first words. "I promised never willingly to see you again; never to speak to you. I *had* to promise it."

"Never is a long day," he replied, standing by her on the hearthrug. "If I know anything of you, Cyrilla, you will be true to me in your inmost heart; you cannot help being so—you could not, if you would. When time and chance shall have worked things round, and I, poor, despised and rejected now, shall have risen to a position that will justify my coming here to ask again for you, even in the opinion of Dr. Dynevor—and a conviction is within me that I shall so rise—I mean to come. I want you, Cyrilla, to give me the hope that I *may* come. It will cheer me on my way."

"I dare not," she whispered.

"Understand me, Cyrilla. I am not asking you to disobey your father, and engage yourself to me. I would not ask it. This only I say: that when I am in a position to satisfy even him—if I ever shall be so

—and you are still unmarried, that you will cancel the harsh note you wrote to me——"

"I wrote by his command," she interrupted.

"Of course; I understand that. Cyrilla, do you know that I have loved you above every earthly thing? Not a moment of the day for years past, but you have occupied my thoughts; not a dream of the night, but you have filled it!"

"As you have mine," she cried, wringing her hands, and speaking freely in the moment's anguish. "To part from you is like parting with life. Oh, John! I could not say it but for this dreadful ending."

The tears were raining from her eyes. John Hartley forgot himself in the moment's anguish, and drew her head to his shoulder.

"What will the world be to us without one another, Cyrilla?"

"Don't tempt me, John. I must be true to my duty."

"My darling, I do not wish to tempt you. I do not seek from you a promise to be mine; I do not even ask you to keep unmarried for my sake; I dare not in honour. What I do ask is this—that should the favourable time and circumstances ever come, and you be still free, and Dr. Dynevor not then object, I may come again and woo you?"

"I tell you that I may not," she repeated in a tone

of anguish—and it seemed that she scarcely understood him clearly; and she withdrew from him and stood near the mantelpiece. "I must forget you as I best may. How can I disobey my father?"

The words chilled him. "Say you will not."

Her sobs nearly choked her. He would have taken her hands again, but she waved him off. She had ever been an obedient daughter, and in this, her bitter trial, she would not fail now. Mr. Hartley felt his anger rising. Disappointment, vexation, mortified love, rendered him unjust. In the moment's hot haste, in his bitter trouble, he began to think she could not truly love him, perhaps never had loved him; and his face turned pale.

"I ask for the last time, Cyrilla. As you deal with me, so will I deal with you. Reject my prayer, and I will strive to put your image from my heart—as you have just boasted to me you will strive to put me out of yours."

Her heart felt as though it were breaking. She leaned against the wall by the mantelpiece and pressed her hands upon her bosom. But she could not press down its pain.

"I have no resource, John; none. I must not disobey my father."

"Fare you well then, Cyrilla," he quietly said. "If ever we meet again it will be as strangers."

And the next moment he had gone from the room, a bitter smile upon his lips. Gone from her for ever! Cyrilla buried her head on the sofa pillows in her despair, almost wishing she might never look up again. And that was the manner of their parting.

And there was so much she would fain have questioned him about—where it was that he was going to? what kind of place the tutorship offered him was likely to be?—and she had not asked it. The following day he had left the town.

Oldchurch took up the notion that the Reverend John Hartley quitted the place in mortification at his non-success as to the minor canonry. A few weeks, and he was quite forgotten.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE NEW DEAN.

TEN years!. What a slice it seems to take out of the history of a life! Ten weary years!—and the heart preying upon itself, its sorrows, and its blighted hopes, all that long while!—Cyrilla's heart.

Ten years! For in this last chapter or two we have been telling of the past; now we have, so to say, come again to the present. It is not so very long since Mary Dynevor was married to Charles Baumgarten; her two sisters Regina and Grace are also married.

It was Thursday afternoon, and the cathedral bell was ringing for service; a few stragglers, half-a-dozen at the most, came leisurely towards the cloisters. Oldchurch is never very full in October of the prebendal families.

Pacing what was called the Green Walk—a convenient promenade hard by, near the deanery and the prebendal houses—was a fair, attractive-looking

woman, with a sweet, sad face. The smooth, open brow was indented with two upright middle lines, that unmistakable sign of care; they used not to be there; and the blue eyes wore an expression that told their owner lived much in the inward life. She was but a year or two past thirty; she did not look more; nevertheless her hair began to be streaked with silver. It was Cyrilla. Ten years have passed over her head since that great trouble fell upon her; and ten years make a change.

There were other changes, too, at Oldchurch. The pleasant bishop had passed away. He had been translated, not to a better appointment; not to be Primate of All England, or even to one of the three desirable sees, but to a land where mitres are not. Bishops, for the most part, live to a good old age; he of Oldchurch had died young—comparing him with some of those very ancient ones, who seem to last out for ever. The ultra grave men of the Prelates' Bench had turned upon him rather the cold shoulder, royal favourite though he was. But he was gone, and another filled his place; an austere man, who gave a frown where the late bishop had given a smile, and who looked sharply after the loaves and fishes. Oldchurch did not think it had gained by the change.

The dean, old and ailing long ago, lived yet; but the great change for him was approaching; in fact,

his death was looked for almost daily. Two of the prebendaries had also passed away; one had been removed to a deanery: and their stalls were filled up by others. Dr. Maude-Dynevor, proud and pompous, had latterly found his office of sub-dean no sinecure from the incapacity of the dean. In fact, he almost began to fancy himself dean in reality. Two or three of the old minor canons had likewise dropped off. Mr. Pope had become a very good chanter, and was sacrist to the cathedral. Which naturally brings us to John Hartley.

*There* was the greatest change! Sure, none had risen in the social scale as he. Some such examples are not wanting; as those who keep their eyes upon the moves of the clerical chess-table well know. The tutorship, procured for him by the ready kindness and influence of the late bishop, was in the family of the Earl of Saxonby, a Cabinet minister and shining star in the political horizon. The earl had a great many daughters, and only one son, Viscount Weyford. Daughter after daughter had been born, until the earl and countess despaired of a son; so that when he did arrive he was made much of. A wayward boy in his twelfth year, when Mr. Hartley was engaged, whose duty it was to prepare him for Eton. Mr. Hartley was regarded as a gentleman in the earl's family, was treated as one of themselves; and when the earl's

chaplain was inducted to something better, he was appointed chaplain in his place. His rise then was rapid. Perhaps it might not have been quite so much so but for Lady Charlotte Saxonby. She contrived to fall in love with Mr. Hartley; and he—if he did not love her as he had once loved Cyrilla Dynevor—liked her very much. The earl sanctioned the match. When a man, peer though he may be, has six girls upon his hands, the settlement of one of them with a young clergyman, whose preferment he can take care of, is not to be despised. Five years subsequent to the period of his leaving Oldchurch, the Reverend John Hartley was enjoying a living of twelve hundred a-year and a stall in a cathedral. Not only that. His name stood high in public fame as one of the cleverest men of the day; a sound divine, and most able preacher.

What thought Dr. Maude-Dynevor then? The man he had so despised had risen in this short time to be a canon like himself. If by chance they met in the world now, they would meet on equal ground; divines of the same social standing. He who had been rejected for Cyrilla with so much unseemly and unnecessary contempt, had been welcomed for the Lady Charlotte Saxonby. And poor Cyrilla? She could only hear, and bear in silence; but it had lined her brow and silvered her hair. Her father may have

felt a qualm when he gazed on her pale sad face; if so, he did not let it appear; but he growled angrily at her when she rejected an offer of marriage. It was a very eligible offer; but Cyrilla meekly declined it.

Her time was spent in various duties: in superintending her younger sisters when Aunt Ann was not with them, or in taking care of her invalid aunt at Berton Rectory. One season she spent at Eaton Place, when she was presented; but London gaiety rather jarred upon her: the heart was not in tune with it.

The younger ones were all married now. Cyrilla was the only one left. "That old maid, Cyrilla," the daughters in the precincts, who had been children when she was a girl of twenty, called her now. She seemed to have outlived her companions, they had married, and were dispersed in the world. Mary Lane, her chief friend, had gone too. Younger sisters had sprung up; but they and Cyrilla seemed to have no sympathy, nothing in common the one with the other.

The second girl, Caroline, had married very young; it was just after Mr. Hartley quitted Oldchurch, when she was scarcely out of the schoolroom; a marriage quite after the sub-dean's own heart. The bridegroom was a colonel, thirty years at least older than his bride; but he made a good settlement on her, and he

was a K.C.B. He carried her off to India, and soon rose to be a general. Lady Hume was at home now, paying a long visit to her father, with her three children, a gay, dashing, scornful woman, who put upon Cyrilla, and turned the care of her children over to her. Sir Thomas was fighting in India. Personal happiness denied her, Cyrilla was trying to make her own unselfish happiness in caring for others. She engaged in works of benevolence, of usefulness. Did any old bedesman, or his poor old wife, fall sick, they found a true friend in Miss Dynevor. When other ladies of the precincts were wasting their time in that utter waste of all wastes, morning visits, Cyrilla would be paying visits too. But they were visits of a different nature. The image of John Hartley was often present to her. When one has loved as Cyrilla had, the beloved one is not easily displaced from the heart; though she only thought of him as one utterly lost to her, whom she should never again see in this world. She pictured to herself his happy life with his wife; and a sore feeling would now and then intrude, for she could not help thinking that in the blaze of his new fortunes he might have sought *her* again instead of Lady Charlotte Saxonby. Things with John Hartley were not, however, quite so bright as Cyrilla's fancy pictured.

What a blessing this life would be if we could keep

from it sickness, and care, and sorrow! Trouble came in its most ominous guise to Lady Charlotte Hartley. After the birth of her little girl she never grew strong; and symptoms of consumption supervened. Dr. Hartley—he had taken his degree; some honorary post having been conferred upon him at Oxford, which necessitated it—obtained leave from his bishop, and accompanied his wife to a warmer climate in the Pyrenees, to which she had been ordered. Dr. Hartley came back alone: his wife was left in her foreign grave. He had been at home some eighteen months now, chiefly residing in his prebendal house at the distant cathedral town.

The bell was going for service, and Cyrilla paced the Green Walk. Lady Hume's troublesome children were running and racing, making a great noise; the yellow leaves of the elm-trees fell about her, in the autumn wind and weather. Cyrilla's eyes were raised frequently to the windows of the house nearest her; that of Mr. Lane. Mary Lane—Mrs. Wilkinson by her new title—had arrived at home the previous day, and Cyrilla was wishing she would come out. Her husband was H.B.M. consul, somewhere in the south of France, and Mary had come to England for a short visit.

"Are you going to service this afternoon, Cyrilla?"

Cyrilla turned at the sharp question—which came

from her sister, Lady Hume: a tall, imperious woman, dressed in rare satins and gold bracelets. Throw a surplice over her, and put her hair under a trencher, and she might have been taken for a photograph of Dr. Maude-Dynevor himself, even to the sharp, perky nose.

"No," replied Cyrilla, "I have to take care of the children."

"Where's the nurse?" asked Lady Hume.

"Her cold is so much worse this afternoon that I told her to lie down."

"I declare you are growing quite absurd, Cyrilla!" flashed Lady Hume. "As if servants want to lie down! or should be allowed to if they do!"

"Do not let it trouble you, Caroline: I will take care of the children."

Lady Hume sailed away: some freak had induced her to attend service that afternoon, but she rarely did so on week days. The bell ceased, and the deadened notes of the organ might be faintly distinguished. They were very tiresome, these spoilt children, but Cyrilla knew that they would be worse indoors, and she walked about with them for nearly an hour. At length Mary Wilkinson saw her, and came out. They sat down on one of the benches, and the children ran about the grass, quarrelling and picking weeds.

"Does it not seem like old times for you and me to be seated here, watching the noisy crows, and hearing the organ strike up?" began Mrs. Wilkinson.

"I wish you could be always here, Mary," was the answer.

"How is it you do not marry?" was Mary Wilkinson's abrupt rejoinder. "I thought you of all girls would have married well."

A faint colour tinged Cyrilla's cheek. Emotion upon that subject had well-nigh died away. "Some girls are destined to marry and some are not," she said, with a sad smile. "I suppose I am one of the latter."

"Nonsense! you will marry yet."

"Never," replied Cyrilla, more vehemently than the subject might seem to warrant. "I shall never marry."

"Never is a long day," laughed Mrs. Wilkinson; and Cyrilla's remembrance went back. They were the very words said to her by John Hartley in their last interview, when he had quitted her in anger. How many a time since had it been in Cyrilla's thoughts—Had she allowed him the hope he craved, would he have come to claim her?

"Do you remember John Hartley?" suddenly asked Mrs. Wilkinson. And the question was so very apposite to what was just then passing in Cyrilla's mind that it struck her into silence.

"The young curate who was at Berton once, and afterwards tried for a minor canonry," proceeded Mrs. Wilkinson, supposing Cyrilla's memory needed to be refreshed, and never noticing the vivid blush on the fair cheeks.

"Yes, I do remember him," was the quiet answer.

"I saw a good deal of him and his wife abroad. Poor Lady Charlotte, a delicate, interesting woman, was in a consumption when they came. Dr. Hartley told me that he brought her quite as a forlorn hope. How quickly he rose!" added Mary Wilkinson, after a pause. "Only picture it, Cyrilla! the position he holds now, and his trying for a humble minor canonry not so many years ago! 'There is a tide in the affairs of man:' he must have taken his at flood-time, if any one ever did."

Cyrilla did not speak.

"It was a sad pity about his wife."

"Did you like Lady Charlotte?" was the low rejoinder.

"It was impossible not to like her. She was aware how little hope remained, and the prospect of leaving her husband and child was a constant grief to her. She lingered nearly a twelvemonth after they came out. She has been dead—oh, going on for two years now."

"Was he much altered—Mr. Hartley?"

"Dr. Hartley, Cyrilla," laughed Mrs. Wilkinson; "don't forget his honours. Very little altered indeed. Just the same free, unaffected man that he was as a curate. He asked me if I recollected his rejection for the minor canonry at Oldchurch by the dean and chapter. Lady Charlotte made him tell her the story I remember his saying, 'Ah, Charlotte, had I been successful then, I should never have married you.'"

"Service is over; they are coming out of college," interrupted Cyrilla.

So they were—by stragglers, as they went into it. Lady Hume stalked up to them.

"We were talking of Dr. Hartley," Mrs. Wilkinson remarked to her. "How strangely he has got on! But it is of course owing to his marriage, and to his father-in-law, Lord Saxonby."

"Cyrilla's old flame," returned Lady Hume.

"Caroline!" remonstrated Cyrilla, with a burning face.

Mary Wilkinson looked at them; at the one, and at the other. Cyrilla's confused look puzzled her. "You do not mean to say there was ever anything between him and Cyrilla!" she impulsively uttered.

"Something there undoubtedly was," said Caroline Hume. "I cannot tell you what. I fancy there would have been more, but that papa discovered it."

"If there was anything, why did he not come

back and claim Cyrilla when he could do it?" cried Mrs. Wilkinson. "Why have married Charlotte Saxonby?"

She, Cyrilla, escaped to the screaming children. Lady Hume, replying to the question, threw back her head, very much after the manner of the sub-dean.

"He would not have dared to come. A man who aspired to be one of our minor canons, had tried for the post, would never have the assurance really to offer himself to a canon's daughter."

"Oh, Caroline! that's just like you!" laughed Mary Wilkinson. "I would not be as proud as you for the world. Hark!"

The cathedral death-bell struck out, and went booming over the city. Three times three, and some quick strokes after it in succession; betokening that a soul had just passed to its account. It was not a familiar sound, for that bell did not condescend to toll for ordinary mortals; and the three ladies stood transfixed.

"The passing-bell!" exclaimed Cyrilla, scarcely above her breath. "It—I fear—it must be for the dean!"

With one accord they turned their eyes on the deanery windows. The blinds were being drawn down: little need to inquire further. But at that moment the senior sexton was emerging from the cloisters, and

they made a sign to him. He came up, touching his hat.

"Yes, ladies, it is tolling for the dean. He died ten minutes ago."

Never, sure, was commotion known in any staid cathedral like unto that which suddenly burst on Oldchurch! The news, startling it to its centre, came to it one morning some two or three weeks subsequent to the death of the dean.

He, poor old man, had been buried with all honours, many of the canons coming to Oldchurch to attend the funeral. Once under the ground he was of course forgotten, according to the custom of this world, and Oldchurch, especially its clergy, busied itself with speculations as to his successor. *Le roi est mort, vive le roi!*

The fortunate man was generally expected to be Dr. Maude-Dynevor. Dr Dynevor himself entertained no doubt whatever on the point. Albeit scarcely usual to raise a canon of a cathedral to be its dean, there were reasons for believing it would be done in this instance. Dr. Dynevor looked upon the post as already his; and he held up his head higher than before (if that could well be), and hardly allowed his buckled shoes to touch the ground as he trod Oldchurch streets. "Dean Maude-Dynevor!" he fondly

repeated over to himself again and again; and the sound was as the sweetest incense to his soul.

"Has the appointment come?" asked Mr. Lane, abruptly breaking in upon the doctor one evening with the question, as he sat over his wine after dinner. "Have you received it?"

"No; not yet," replied the doctor eagerly. "Why?"

"I've just seen it in one of the evening papers. It states that the appointment is made; but no name is mentioned."

"It's on its way, no doubt," said Dr. Dynevor; "those papers always get hold of things first. Sit down, Lane, and take some wine. We shall have news in the morning."

The doctor was right. News came in by the morning post. The new dean was named. But it was not Dr. Dynevor that the Chapter of Oldchurch was recommended to elect as its head; it was John Hartley, D.D.

You cannot wonder at the commotion—at the commotion that ensued in the Chapter House, or at the internal commotion which racked the mind and fizzed in the brain of Dr. Dynevor. It was more than a morning's wonder.

But the chapter had no thought of rebelling against the mandate. Dr. Hartley was not a man to be despised for his own sake, and he had a powerful

friend in that great personage the Earl of Saxonby, who could make deans with a movement of his little finger. John Hartley stood high amidst the clergy; he had made the world respect him; and the Chapter of Oldchurch Cathedral generally regarded the appointment with complacency; looking upon that little interlude of his putting up for a subordinate post under them, some ten years before, as a sort of romance in life's history, which need not be remembered. But Richard Dynevor? In the first place, he was grievously disappointed. Had even the Archbishop of Canterbury chosen to constitute himself Dean of Oldchurch, were such a thing possible, Dr. Dynevor would have resented it as a personal grievance. In the second place, a canon likes to stand well with his dean. But how would his new dean regard *him?* —how would he resent the contempt, the scorn, once lavished upon him with unnecessary bitterness? Take it for all in all, Richard Dynevor was not in a state of merriment.

Cyrilla had gone forth that morning to see the sick old mother of one of the vergers. The verger, returning to his home after morning service, met Cyrilla as she was quitting it.

"So the new dean is coming at last, ma'am!" he said, when his bow was over.

"The new dean!" echoed Cyrilla, somewhat startled,

for she had been aware of the expectations of her father.

"The news, ma'am, has took everybody by surprise," said the man. "We should have made a guess at anybody rather than him. He is not strange to the college—though he never thought to be dean of it, I'll answer for't. I mind him well, Miss Dynevor; especially when we were going to have him for one of the minor canons, and did not, after all!"

"Who is it?" asked the wondering Cyrilla.

"It's Dr. Hartley, ma'am; young Hartley, as we'd used to call him then. If he's only half as pleasant now, he'll be the most popular dean Oldchurch has ever known. There's a dozen women, pretty well, clearing out the deanery, for fear it should not be ready for him."

The man talked on, but Cyrilla heard him not. John Hartley coming there as dean!

It was even so. Verily, as the canons said to one another, it was more like a romance than an episode of real life.

Dr. Hartley arrived at Oldchurch in due course, the deanery having been made ready for his reception. He came on a Saturday evening, too late for any of the clergy to see him that night. All the ten prebendaries were at Oldchurch; having assembled not only to elect and welcome their new dean, but because

it was the time of the November audit. Even the Oxford prebend had come down—a rare occurrence. It was understood that the dean would read himself in at morning service, and the cathedral was crowded as it had rarely been.

Once more, as connected with this little history, the bedesmen stood at the chapter door; once more they bent their bodies in reverence as the clergy came forth into the cloisters. *He* was at their head, John Hartley, wearing his white robes and the scarlet badge of a doctor of divinity; carrying his trencher in his hand, and a small roll of paper or parchment. Cyrilla was in her pew. But for the greatest effort she must have burst into hysterical tears as the white-robed procession came on and entered the choir, marshalled by the vergers and bedesmen: the lay-clerks, the college boys, the minor canons, the prebendaries, the new dean, and the bishop, who happened to be at Oldchurch. The congregation stood up; the organ pealed forth the strains of the Hallelujah Chorus. Upon reaching the dean's stall, the bishop turned half round and bowed his head, perhaps to indicate to its new occupant that it was his—as if John Hartley did not know it!—and then passed on to his throne. The canons stood round, waiting while he stepped into it—he, John Hartley! All this pomp and ceremony for him! Cyrilla glanced at him.

Some lines of silver streaked his hair, but his face had not much changed. He appeared to look taller; certainly he was more noble and commanding. In the pew underneath him sat a lady of some forty years. It was understood to be Lady Elizabeth Saxonby, the eldest sister of his late wife. She had been much with him since that lady's death, for the sake of the little motherless girl.

There was no chanting that memorable day. The dean read the prayers and lessons. A sonorous voice was his. And when the prayers were over, he unrolled the parchment, and read out his title and his appointment. "I, John Hartley, doctor of divinity," etc., etc. Did he call to mind the time when he had sat by the minor canons, aspiring only to be made one of *them*? Ay, that he did; and so did Dr. Dynevor. Next he went to the Communion-table, preceded by those bowing bedesmen, six of them, and followed by Dr. Dynevor and Mr. Pope, taking his own place at its head, and reading the Commandments. Yes, from that day forward, he, John Hartley, was the head and master of Oldchurch Cathedral. He did not preach; it was not his place that day to do so; it was Dr. Dynevor's. And the doctor, swallowing his mortification, and eating humble-pie, gave a very good doctrinal sermon. But for the unfortunate fact that he was taking his close residence of one-and-twenty days, the

doctor might possibly have had a cold that Sunday, and stayed away from service. He had decided, however, to put a good face on the matter, and welcome the new dean. It would never have done to let his resentment appear.

"Are you friendly with the dean, papa?" Lady Hume inquired of her father that night. Cyrilla would not have dared to ask it.

"Friendly?" retorted the doctor, in a lofty tone of surprise, as if he had always been on terms of brotherly love with John Hartley—for if he did have to eat humble-pie the world was not to see it go down. "What should hinder it, pray? The dean was remarkably cordial to-day, and inquired particularly after the health and welfare of my family." The plain fact of the matter being that the dean, when in the Chapter House, had been as polite to him as he was to the chapter generally. He certainly did say, "I hope your family are well, Dr. Dynevor."

"You and Cyrilla must call on Lady Elizabeth to-morrow," went on the doctor.

Cyrilla lifted her eyes with a start. "I call, papa!"

The canon gave her one of his haughty stares. "Of course. I cannot allow my family to be wanting in courtesy to that of Lord Saxonby."

Cyrilla, however, did not go. Delicately sensitive and refined, she shrank from the bare idea of meeting

the dean incidentally; how, then, could she go, bold-faced, to his house? Lady Hume proceeded thither alone in state in the father's carriage, in her satins and bracelets, doing duty for the family collectively. A coldly imperious woman looked she; and Lady Elizabeth found her to be so.

"You would like her sister better," remarked Mrs. Wilkinson, who had come in as Lady Hume was departing—for the deanery was besieged that day; the dean was a free man, remember. "No two sisters can well be more unlike than are Lady Hume and Miss Maude-Dynevor."

"Oh, poor thing, she is quiet to a fault, is Cyrilla Dynevor," said a young lady, who was sitting there, the late archdeacon's daughter. "A regular old maid; goes about amongst the poor, and all that."

"And takes care of her sister's children, who won't take care of them for herself, and is all that is good and loving to every one," spoke up Mary Wilkinson, angry at the disparagement of Cyrilla. "Do you remember Cyrilla?" she added, turning to the dean, who was present.

"Yes. Oh yes, I remember her," was the impassive answer, delivered in a most impassive tone.

"I observed a lady sitting in the pew with Lady Hume yesterday; perhaps that was Miss Dynevor?" remarked Lady Elizabeth. "A sweet-looking woman,

with an expression of sadness in her face. One might fancy that some great care or sorrow had passed over her, and left its traces there."

"That was Cyrilla," cried the archdeacon's daughter. "As to care, I don't know what care she can have—unless it is that she's not married."

"That Cyrilla is not married is her own fault," said Mrs. Wilkinson. "She might have had young Leader. He is Sir Charles now. He asked her twice over, and made no secret of it."

"She may marry yet," observed Lady Elizabeth.

"It is scarcely likely," returned the young lady. "Why, she must be two-and-thirty!—nobody would ask her."

"I add several years on to thirty, and sometimes I think my chance may not be gone yet," laughed Lady Elizabeth, good-humouredly. And the archdeacon's daughter blushed to her fingers' ends; she had made a mistake in her good manners.

The precincts were up in arms. The Dean of Oldchurch was about to hold an evening reception, and the cards for it had gone out but charily. Those who received them were wild with delight; those who did not get them were wild with anger. The forgotten ones this time would be remembered another, but that did not soften present wounds.

Cards had come to Dr. Maude-Dynevor's—for Dr. Maude-Dynevor, for Lady Hume, and for Miss Maude-Dynevor. "Do you go, Cyrilla?" asked the doctor, with indifference.

"Yes, papa," was the quiet answer. "I *must* get over the first meeting with him," thought Cyrilla to herself. "As well do it now as later."

The evening came. Lady Hume was gorgeous, in black velvet and pearls; Cyrilla simple, in white crape —for they were in slight mourning; the doctor wore silver buckles in his shoes and breeches, and was as polished as a doctor of divinity can be. The dean came forward cordially.

Once more his pleasant tones sounded on Cyrilla's ear in friendly greeting; once more the tips of her white-gloved fingers were within his. What she answered she never knew. Her very lips were white, her tongue was half-paralyzed; all she felt was that she made herself a simpletor and that he must have seen she did. Taking refuge in the quietest corner to be found, she had a dreadful recollection of having called him "Mr. Hartley," and then mending it with "Dr. Dean."

The dean's young daughter was in the room; a fair child between three and four years old. She released herself from a lady who was holding her prisoner, and ran up to Cyrilla.

"What is your name?" inquired Cyrilla.

"Charlotte. Where are the little girls?"

"Little girls?" repeated Cyrilla, not understanding.

"Those little girls that played with me in the Green Walk this afternoon. They played with me after you went into the house."

"Did they?" said Cyrilla. "They are in bed now. They will play with you another time."

"Papa said I ought to be in bed. But Aunt Elizabeth said I should come in first. She——"

"Are you making acquaintance with my little girl, Miss Dynevor?"

The speaker was the dean. Cyrilla collected her senses, and answered as she might have answered any other dean.

"She is making acquaintance with me rather, I think. It appears she recognized me as belonging to my little nieces, and came to inquire after them. I tell her they are in bed."

"Ah! like good children. You hear, Charlotte?"

Charlotte flew away—possibly lest the mandate should be issued for her.

"How very little Oldchurch is altered!" resumed the dean.

"Not much."

"You have lost all your sisters, I believe."

"Yes; they are all married. Some are in one place,

some in another. Regina is in India. She went out to Lady Humè, and married there."

"Are they well at Berton Rectory?"

"Quite well, thank you. My uncle met with an accident, a bad fall, and has never been the same active man since. My aunt is feeble."

"I shall go over and see them some day. Are you often there?"

"Not as I used to be. Papa seems not to care to be much alone, so I stay at home with him."

"And your brother Edmund? All your brothers?"

"They are all well, thank you. Edmund paid us a visit in the summer."

A few more sentences passed, coldly polite as these were, and the dean moved away. Cyrilla did not come into contact with him again. "I am glad it is over," she thought, as she left the deanery. "It was only the first meeting I dreaded."

Twilight was on the earth the following evening; twilight, almost darkness, lay on the cloisters. Cyrilla, who had gone in to sit with Mary Wilkinson for ten minutes, and had sat an hour and ten, came hastily out at Mr. Lane's cloister door, as being the nearest way home. She sped along the south side, and in turning the corner into the west ran right against—the dean.

"Oh, I—I—*beg* your pardon," panted Cyrilla, when

the darkness allowed her to discover who it was. And she would have darted as speedily away, but the dean's detaining hand was laid upon her. He had a right to know who had thus unceremoniously flown against him.

"Is it you, Cyrilla?"

"Indeed I beg your pardon, Dr. Hartley. I was running home from Mr. Lane's. I never heard your steps."

"There were no steps to hear," said the dean. "In passing through the cloisters, I had halted, and was looking over into the graveyard. Upon hearing your footsteps I turned away, and you came against me."

"I am very sorry; indeed I am. Please to let me go."

"Presently," he answered, retaining his hold. "Have you forgotten the evening when you and I stood here before—ten years ago?"

Had she forgotten it! She did not speak, but he might have heard her heart beating.

"Cyrilla, how is it to be? Shall the old feelings be renewed?—or are we to remain strangers, playing false before the world and with each other?"

She burst into a flood of distressing tears. "Oh! do not mock me! I have suffered enough without that."

"What do you mean, Cyrilla? Mock *you!* You,

who have lain enshrined in my heart, as its most sacred treasure, all these years; though not awakened from it into life! And—unless I am entirely mistaken—as I have lain in yours."

She cried still; more softly. He drew her nearer to him with his all-protecting arm.

"Will you come home to me, and be my little girl's mother?"

"It could not be," she sobbed. "I am not fit now. What would the world say?"

"Say!—the world!" he muttered. "Not fit! Why are you not fit?"

"I am more than thirty years old, and my hair is going grey," she meekly answered. "It would say you should choose one younger and fairer."

"I am thirty-eight," laughed the dean, "and my hair is greyer than yours. Oh, Cyrilla! unselfish as ever! Do you know, my darling, that were your hair white and your years threescore, I would rather wed you than all the younger and fairer ones in the world?"

She no longer essayed to draw away from him; she stole her hand into his, and laid her face upon his shoulder: and the dean—dean though he was—took from it what kisses he pleased.

"I must go now," she softly whispered. "I must indeed."

"When I choose to let you. You are a prisoner in my own domains, Miss Dynevor. The cloisters belong to me now, please to remember, and I shall not release you until I think fit. They were not mine, exactly, that other night."

"How did you get out that night?"

"I did not get out. I remained in them until morning."

"Oh, John!"

"I did. Ah, Cyrilla! I have undergone more for the love of you than you may think for. You ought to recompense me."

"How shall I be able to tell papa?" she whispered.

"Don't tell him," said the dean, laughing; "leave it to me."

"Do you know, I cannot think of you as the Dean of Oldchurch," resumed Cyrilla, as they walked arm-in-arm towards the canon's door. "You have seemed to me ever since you came as the plain John Hartley of old, except when I see you marching into college at the head of them all. And then I can scarcely believe it."

"I may be the dean to the world; to you I am John Hartley. Cyrilla, cast your thoughts back to the night we parted. Where is the difference between the promise I wished you to give me and the actual facts, as they have turned out? I asked you to let

me win you when I became grand enough for Dr. Dynevor; and I have done so."

"A thousand times have I repented not giving you the promise," she impulsively rejoined, her eyelashes again becoming wet. "It seemed, in these later years, as though I had brought all my misery upon myself. I think it is that, John, which has silvered my hair."

He wrung her hand, waited to see her enter, and turned off to the deanery.

"I suppose you will not refuse Cyrilla to me now, Dr. Dynevor?" cried the dean, the following day—which was the way that he, without preparation or circumlocution, entered upon the matter. "She is willing to become my wife, subject to your approval."

Dr. Dynevor was taken utterly by surprise. Never for a moment had he believed the dean would renew his attentions to Cyrilla. His face turned scarlet, and he bent nearly as low as the old bedesmen; muttering words of "the honour conferred upon his daughter by Mr. Dean."

Mr. Dean laughed outright—and could not help it. He was thinking of the strange changes that occur on the stage of life.

So very shortly there was another wedding, which took the last of Dr. Maude-Dynevor's daughters from

him. Aunt Ann came down with the intention of presiding at the breakfast, bringing with her the gorgeous bird of paradise, which she kept laid up as a prize-adornment for state ceremonies, Cyras's present —Cyras, who had now settled down at Wellington with a wife and a house, and was altogether flourishing.

Another guest came with Aunt Ann to Oldchurch, specially invited by Dr. Dynevor, Lady Grace Baumgarten—Lady Grace, who was with us at the first page of this history as she is at the last; the same fair, fascinating, graceful woman, ever welcome to all with whom she came into contact.

But, after all, Aunt Ann found there was to be no state breakfast for herself and the bird of paradise to preside at, for the dean and Cyrilla preferred their wedding to be without form and show. They were quietly married before morning prayers in the cathedral on New-Year's Day, with just half-a-dozen close friends as witnesses, and then departed for Avon House, which had been offered to them by Lord Avon.

A week or two's stay there only, and they returned to the deanery. Cyrilla, with a thankful, loving spirit, entered upon her new home under the sheltering care of one who would ever guide and love her. And the demoiselles of the precincts—not one of whom but had cast a hope on her own account to the

new and attractive dean—did wonder greatly at the change apparent in her. For, if Cyrilla Dynevor had looked worn and sad enough for an old maid, Cyrilla Hartley looked fresh and young, as though no wife had ever been so happy.

And thus we leave all our friends at peace.

THE END.

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